

Kafla Intercontinental

(An International journal of Art, Literature & Culture)
Summer 2010, Price: Rs. 20, Life Membership : Rs. 1000

RNI No. CHA-ENG/1994/235

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Printed, Published & Edited by

Dev Bhardwaj, # 3437 Sector 46-C,
Chandigarh-160047 (India).
Ph. +98728-23437,
e-mail: editorkafla@yahoo.com
Website: www.kaflaintercontinental.com

Printed at :

Computata Services, Okhla New Delhi
Phone. 011-26385761

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Editorial

Here we are with yet another issue of *Kafla* (Summer 2010) that presents the creative reflections of many poets, story writers and novelists. The issue has been enriched by scholars, poets and critics from different disciplines and states.

In this issue we have included the poetry of R. Mohan Kumar, Dinu Bhadresaria, Vithal Lanjesar, L. B. Gayakawad, Hanan Anwad, Anjana Anil, Madhukant Kalprit, Arunachalam Angappan, Uktamoy, Jayanta Kar Sharma, Puttu Parshuram Kulkarni and S. M. Maheshwari.

The essay *Shashi Tharoor's Smile for Sale* by Amrender K. Sharma and Manju Roy aims at exploring the relational nature of truth in the story. It represents in a way the Hegelian dialectic confronted by Marx as the contention of ideas marginally contextualized lead to less judgmental proclamations.

Dalit Pride and Black Suffering in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things by Hyacinth Pink brings forth the century old social structure in contradiction with the contemporary setup and the success with which the characters of Roy meet the tradition, of course with the weapon of revolution in the consciousness.

Music for Peace from Mizo Aspect by R. L. Thanmawia is quite an interesting presentation in the sense that it tells about the long tradition of music in the Mizo society and its significance in their routine life. The author not only discusses the culture of music in the Mizo society but also the introduction of western musical instruments such as Mouth Organ, Violin and Guitar etc. which synchronize now well with the traditional one's like Khuang, Dar, Seki and Benghung that gives a newer dimension to the music here.

Thanks Giving Dance by Ailynti Nongbri is an outstanding piece representing the rich cultural heritage of the Khasi people in India. It speaks about the remarkable thanks giving dance to God by the Khasi people. This dance is held every year in the month of April in the honour of God for bestowing prosperity on the Khasi people. The pictorial part of the piece makes it more interesting.

Bangladeshi Short Story : Contemporary Trends by Dr. Rafique Ullah Khan is an interesting account of the long trajectory of Bangla story that derives significantly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature pioneered by Gurudev Rabinder Nath Thakur. It has come down a long way to the post-colonial and post-independence literature in Bangladesh. Shaukat Osman, Sardar Jayenuddin, Alaudin Al Azad, Syed Huq, Habib, Jahan, Salim Murshid, Mamun Hussain, Wasi Ahmed and Mashiul Alam are the prime torch bearers who have given a new texture and dimension to the writing of short story in Bangladesh.

The story *My Mother, Me and My Daughter* by Sanam Noor is an excellent description of the sorrow state of woman in the society of Pakistan where tribal laws still muffle the voice of the innocent and the poor. It represents a strong voice for the gender rights and a genuine angst against the old jingoist stereotypes about a section of the society that has suffered for a long time. Then there is *Life Toy* by Potluru Subhramanyam, a nice touching story of a young child Bakkaiah longing for a push-cart unaware of the irony of fate that it was meant for whole of his life. Two poetry anthologies *Global Village* by Biplab Majee and *Weeping Womb* by Sreedharan Parakode have also been reviewed by Dr. P.K. Panda and Amitava Chakrabarty in the review section.

We hope that the readers would find the issue interesting and enlightening. Looking forward for your kind cooperation and guidance in the future.

Editors

R. Mohan Kumar / New Lease of Life

Learnt to extract gold and silver
Made jewels and ornaments to decorate
Did, we have the ability to think of
Making gold

No life could be dreamt of
Without breathing even in dream
Did we learn the art of
Making air

Burning of coal
Boiling of water
Knew it gives power
Did, we get the skill of
Making coal and water

Fermentation of ancestors buried turned
Energy below the deep water stored
Acquired the knowledge of
Technique of rigging oil and gas found
Discoveries paved way for automobiles to please
Did we find a solution for both

Cultivating in the soil
Producing and eating to live
Did we learn the magic of
Making soil

Invented the fire
Hidden in the stone
Did we have the sagacity of
Making stone

Traveling to revolving planets
With men in search of resources
Did we plan what next
When those too exhausted

Solemn prayer
No activity against the nature
No move to exploit nature
The desideratum to swear by all

Radical changes peoples to bring
In the style of life around the globe
A new lease of life to
Maintain the Feographical Balance

Sign and indication of portents shown
Then and there and here and there
Not an information but a caution and warning
Journey towards the end commenced
Changes to end the commencement only shall enable
All to live on this Earth

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Dinu Bhadresariya / If I wouldn't be.....

Every now and then
Huminity has been skinning everywhere
Only on account of the propaganda of:
So called religious books;
.... And blind faith

Therefore
Supposing that
I wouldn't be:
A part of worst religion
A piece of classified society
Besides
If I wouldn't be required to bear in
Only few superstitious made world
Having been considered all pros and cons
I have to believe in:
It would have been better

If I would not have been considered
As a DALIT
Specially in so called independent country

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Vitthal Lanjewar / Slavery

Why do I Read fictitious tales
again and again
And builds us aroma of mental slavery
again and again
I chain myself in traditions and rituals
But blames my downfall to destiny
again and again
I trust no more science and technology
But gives vent to self prejudice pride
again and again
With deep pain I regret to be oblivions to humanity
The thought of which bleed me
again and again
Though tears roll down to see
commercial outlets of salvation
Even then I fall prey to their temptations
again and again

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Three poems by Prof. L. B. Gayakawad

Because Weather is Damp

In the body darkened,
I have to light a lamp
To throw deep darkness
I have to be a Champ

I am wetting lazily
In the dark darkness
To forget real purpose
Without a real freshness

I have gone in to
The dense-dark valley
To turn disturbed life
To make it tally

I can't know how
Moment should pass
I have remained there
Without my special grass

I am waiting there
Taking a lit-lamp
I can't burn
Because weather is damp

A Pedagogue Came

A pedagogue came
But was always insulted
Hence no one had such
Which would be scented

Flowers followed Addictions
Because he was neglected
Parents were weeping
As were being unselected

Trees generated shadows
And fuel for death
No one was there
To embrace them underneath
Son was a pedagogue
Though he had parents
To do inhuman dreams
To repay the rents
Tell me, friends!
Had Nature been wrong?
Why did man play?
On a soundless dirty song

I Myself Sold

I lived like a tiger
Goats and sheep ran away
Which where near about
I made them washed away
I got nothing to eat
So entered in to the flock
Everywhere I saw
Block and Block
The flock was weaving
Sleep was not there
To defeat me
Everyone was to dare
All attacked me
I lost internal power
Fought we mindly
Receiving angry shower to shower
Being alone only
I was killed
Sould whispered silently
I myself sold my field

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Hanan Awwad / I Have Elected Peril

They have tortured me
They have torn the screens from my chamber.
They have dug my grave
In throngs of grudges.
They have robbed me of my clothes.
They have crucified my youth through treason and prison
They have tortured me
They have painted my death of the walls of silence.
They have torn out the strings of my voice.
They have beleaguered me.
I am more able to discern that death is my death.
They have tortured me,
They have obscured the light and the moon.
They have made me choose between death and sourjourn.
But I have elected peril
I move step by step
Without minding the ditches in my way.
Your light, your eyes
Have ignited my bursting into flame.
Your heart, your sea, your eyes,
Let me tread my path.
O, my beloved,
O, soldier,
In the army of my country.
O, he who lurks
Deep in my heart.
I call out,
O, my beloved.
O, he who creeps towards the earth,
Towards the house, the field,
The threshing floor,

In my land, my plain
And steppes
My horse may stumble
I may lose part of my kit
Perhaps a rib will crack, slip from my heart
But I shall call out
O, my love, I am still
Abiding by my pledge
I haven't taken off my black clothes

O, my love, soon
Returning from the sun
To the sun,
You, who are returning from the heart
Close to my heart, O, my love
O, soldiers
Coming to us at dawn
As a song and a flame

O, my love, do not blame me.
I may perchance lose something of my youth
I may lose my wedding
And my clothes,
I may lose my life.

The hangman may make me
Suffer all manner of torture.
But I, O, my love
I shall meet you
In a book
O, my love
I shall live you
As a torture
I shall live you
In my torment.

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Two poems by Dr. Anjana Anil

Loving Birds

My words & meanings
Are loving birds...
Leave behind all darkness
Paleness & depression...

My words & meaning
Are green leaves
Full of sublimity... purity
Provide new life !!

My words @ meanings
Are oneness
Full of hope & peace !
Listen...!!

Thoughts

Thoughts are there
Upon the earth of feelings !
Amidst the roots of love
When heart approaches thy presence
Thoughts become a bunch of flowers...
Days & nights become sweet dreams...
Gone... Gone all the sorrows
Join me to preserve the fragrance...
realize the truthfulness &
See the depth of my innocence
Waves of thoughts are glittering
Touch the appeal of moments

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Madhukant Kalpit / Awareness

Awareness flows within me.

The apprehension palpitating in the chest
and in the eyes, a disabled dream,
The self that suffered from a pitch black life
Tired, now looks at the sunrise.

Please do not think that
You cannot celebrate me like a festival.

From the boundary of the field
There is a lush green message:
'if you call me a human being,
I will feel good !'

This is the place where a dream of a man
Like a stone strikes the eyes, so sharp.

In the valley of chest
Lighting a lantern,
Wanders a story, so silent !

Translated from Gurjarati by Dr. G. K. Vankar

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Two poems by Arunachalam Angappan

Blessed Poverty

.....
.....
.....

Affluence snatches away, with a devil's hand,
peace, love, humanity et al. And, to withstand
pressures of law-breaks, they break into pieces.

God and devil, money and morals do never mix.
To hide Mammon you choose nefarious designs,
perplex FERA, Customs, Excise and I.T. Officials.

Communal Amity

.....
.....
.....

Leading lights amidst engulfing dark
showed paths various to reach the mark.
Whose path? Whose mark? Questions arose
pushing man to his destruction so very close.

Jesus, Allah, Shiva quarrel not.
Why Sam, Sahul, Sundar?

Bury your hatchet born of religion, caste, and creed.
An El Dorado will be the whole world if you breed
love and affection not hatred that lays all asunder.

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Three poems by Uktamoy

Tajmahal

I came to pray to you Tajmahal
Oh the monument of love, soul's mehrab
I want to be calmed, you are welcome
Oh the angels of love's palace
Would it be a tear running from love's eyes
Each drop of the apple of a love's eyes
Is an ice falling from the heaven of separation?
I share your beautiful grieves, angel,
You grieves merge in into my pains
The riot engraved in your heart
Has awakened in my heart
The sad beauty enchants
Out scatter the night's dark inks
You are a pet swan ready to fly
The pilgrimage pays the painless world
My beautiful temple attracts the world
With your charm you made a soul fall in love
You are Mumtozmahal to attract the world
You are lucky, your grieves are awake
In each dot of the burnt souls
Unless there is love you are a worship
It is everlasting the love's storms.

Dedication

The fear is seizing me over.
To love you am I mistaken
Having surrendered my flaming heart
To the cunning gaze of your eyes?
You must live for ever, darling.
Or else, my heart would put on fire

Along with your body in the fire.
Does the river Ganga need our ashes so much?
Wouldn't it be enough that much
We have been burning entirely
In the hell of the love's fire

Chandigarh

The wizard might have me drunken
The mixture of diverse flowers with sorcery.
If not, then why should I be longing
For the city of Chandigarh?
My flowerlike soul was imprisoned
In the leaf of the flower by chain.
The squirrels would calm me down
By coming from the branches down.
Why don't you tear away, my heart,
Their chains like a silk thread?
Why are you suffering sweetly, the heart,
From the fate encountered by chance?
Who is the sinner by entering that garden
The peace of the wizard has broken?
Who has swum like a swan
In the lake of the tears?
A bird is flying in the sky singing sadly
Without perceiving its errors deeply.
How could I forgive the goodness
Of that wizard's unforgivable sins?

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Smile for Sale: A Study of Shashi Tharoor's *The Five -Dollar Smile*

Dr Amrendra K Sharma & Dr Manju Roy

Wallace Stevens finds 'thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird.'¹ Likewise, someone may discover one hundred and thirteen ways of looking at a truth. Or maybe there are just as many truths and not 'the truth'. In fact, the multiplicity of truth, in a subtle way, reminds us of a 'correspondence theory of truth.' This theory states that truth is related to a fact - a view that was advocated by Russell and Moore early in the 20th century. But "this label is usually applied much more broadly to any view explicitly embracing the idea that truth consists in a relation to reality, i.e., that truth is a relational property involving a characteristic relation (to be specified) to some portion of reality (to be specified)."²

This article would try to explore the relational (or corresponding) nature of truth in Shashi Tharoor's story titled *The Five-Dollar Smile* through the following:

- 1) People's perception of the marginalised **other** (here represented by Joseph Kumaran)
- 2) Joseph's desire for assimilation with the '**others**', and through it, his attempt to forge an identity, and the '**others**' response to it
- 3) The **other** boys' attitude to the 'five-dollar smile' poster
- 4) The **other** face of NGOs.

Here it may sound apt to explain the process of 'othering.' Kayyal defines it as "a process in which society creates a 'we' and a 'they,' resulting in the majority dominating over the minority."³ It is the majority that thrives and their ideas and opinions are passed from one generation to the next. At times, it is also viewed as having opposite or radically different ideas. As different people are brought up in different atmosphere, they grow up with different philosophies of life. To illustrate, someone may be against death penalty as they lost a loved one by it. On the other hand, a

mother whose daughter was murdered would want the murderer to be killed.

Shashi Tharoor, who successfully fulfills a number of responsibilities as a United Nations Under Secretary General for Communications and Public Information and as a writer, is used to encounter different shades of the same truth or many truths corresponding to various situations or persons. In *The Five -Dollar Smile*, he has wonderfully tried to present the different faces of truth by granting Joseph a somewhat central position in the story. Joseph's situation is not any more or less deserving of sympathy than that of any other child in the orphanage. In spite of being one of the underdogs because of his young age, he has developed his own survival strategies. He uses such strategy when he braces the bigger boys to stay at the dining table early enough to get his fair share of the 'papadams'. Even when he was with his father, adversity was always by his side, as reported by Sister Celine. Perhaps this is the reason why Joseph is quick to accept the orphanage and makes the best of his situation, instead of crying and complaining, except when he is deprived of his 'papadams'. The children at the orphanage, therefore, are not really 'others' to him but an extension of his own self. The reminders of adversity the orphanage presents to him are not entirely new to him. Or, if they are, possibly the extremity of his problems is only a little less in relation to his earlier life in the forests. This analysis questions the sameness of our response to children like Joseph, which is that of pity. There is no doubt that such children deserve sympathy but there are also some characteristics of theirs that are worthy of admiration. In this case, these admirable characteristics are Joseph's sensibility and his determination to survive.

It takes a foreigner to trigger off the desire to be one of the 'others' in Joseph's mind. Ironically, the photographer himself does not impress the boy. But the response his photograph elicits from some American couples instills a hope in him, a wish to go over to the other side of the sea and join 'them.' What begins as a correspondence routine gradually becomes something Joseph finds himself looking forward to. "Frequently, he would hold it

(the letter he got as a reply) up to his face, smothering his face in it, smelling America.”⁴ (21) Though Tharoor has not really dwelt on it, it is apparent from the hints Joseph dropped in his letters, of his wish to go to the USA himself. In fact, its inhabitants and the life there become a source of fascination for the boy. Whatever little of America he receives in the letters - the colour of the notepaper, the lingering perfume, the neatness of the lady’s handwriting - all become features that Joseph learns to associate with America and they lead to his attraction towards the ‘other’ country. All these are symbols of the luxury he has never experienced. He is ready to sever all ties with all that have been his ‘own’ because all that he has are his poverty and squalor- things not at all difficult to give up. That is why he has no qualms about the ‘othering’ of himself. In fact, if we take into account Joseph’s point of view, his leaving for America does not symbolize a trading of his identity on his part, for another one. For him, it is an endeavour, and an opportunityto create an identity for himself. “He had things. He was somebody. With a passport, a suitcase, a ticket, he was not just a little brown face in a crowd around the gruel bowl; he was Master Joseph Kumaran, and he was going somewhere.” (24) It is this excitement of discovering his new self that restrains him from reciprocating appropriately to Sister Celine’s sentimental farewell.

Strangely, the picture of Kumaran (clicked by the photographer), which generates worldwide response, does no good in affirming a sense of identity for Joseph. Instead, he disowns and dismisses it without any second thoughts. The only purpose it serves is to remind him of the unfortunate day when he was forced to relinquish his share of the ‘papadams’. On a closer look, we find there is an inherent logic to Joseph’s rejection of the photograph. It is in this rejection that we can detect the first trace of his ambitions and aspirations, a greater instance of which is later seen in his urge to see America. The photograph of his which is used for a worldwide appeal, is a painful reminder of his marginalized status, something he is aware of but not proud of. It is not something he would like to be recognized by but

would rather be rid of at the first opportunity, as he attempts to do when he gets ready to go abroad.

Like all other mortals, his sense of identity, too, comes from what he has, not from what he has not. “He was given a little suitcase for his clothes, and he swelled with pride at the tangible evidence of his possessions.” (24) At a young age, Joseph has subconsciously learnt the wisdom of the sages, that the greatest chasm in the cosmos is that between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’. At this auspicious moment in his life, Joseph feels he is about to cross that divide, both literally (since he is to go to another country) and metaphorically.

Sadly though, as Joseph is about to discover, the ‘other’ world is not about to welcome him with open arms. Their arms, and their brows, seem to be crossed, in arrogance, at first glance and in self-defense, on taking a second look. They can look at Joseph’s ‘appealing’ photograph and sympathise with him. The feeling of compassion it arouses in them reassures them that they still have a conscience. Maybe some of them would even cough up the required five dollars, appeasing their conscience even further. But if Joseph wants to come over and join them, it makes them feel threatened, as Joseph Kumaran is not the only one suffering from an identity crisis. With the all-encompassing wave of consumerism, each country has been turning its citizens into consumers. Everything from a car to a car shampoo promises to define its users. Even a newspaper, a part of the media that swears it exerts the great power it has with greater responsibility, claims it is a ‘class apart’. Once again, we come back to the tussle between ‘the haves’ and ‘the have-nots.’ For the haves, it is significant that people on the other side continue to be where they are. It is a part of their survival instincts, an attempt at self-preservation. “A cat is a cat because it is not a dog”. Likewise, the rich are the rich because they are not the poor.

Joseph feels this hostility right from the start. Ironically, the airhostess, who is supposed to represent hospitality, is the first one to mark Joseph as a misfit and gets impatient with him. This impatience then passes on to the other passengers on board, which

he feels in their disapproving stares. It makes him feel skeptical of his reception in America and he starts doubting if his 'temporary parents' would recognize him. It dawns on him that it takes more than a passport and a suitcase to forge the kind of identity one wants to. His being suspended in mid air (on the plane) reflects the situation. He has left his old world for a new one that won't allow him entry. "He did not know why he felt suffused with loneliness more intense, more bewildering in its sadness than he had ever experienced in the gruel crowds of HELP. He was alone, lost somewhere between a crumpled magazine clipping and the glossy brightness of a colour photograph." (26)

Since the story is centred on the photograph, it would be interesting to analyse the response of the other children to it. As mentioned earlier, Joseph's plight is not unique. All the children in HELP share similar fates. Sister Eva's threat to Joseph, of replacing him "with another little dark-skinned boy from the orphanage"(25), on his US visit, has a ground in reality. This explains why the other children's reaction to the photograph is different from the 'others', from those belonging to privileged classes. The "MAKE THIS CHILD SMILE AGAIN" poster in the HELP office invites a jocular response (not a compassionate one) from the other boys. Even if they borrowed the perception of the others and started viewing the poster with feeling, it might probably lead to self-pity, which, the boys know, would do them no good. While the others would receive the photograph with sympathy, the victims themselves would do so with empathy. The latter is always more difficult to handle.

Just as Joseph's situation in the story has no singularity (as confirmed by the scribe himself), the NGO in the story, HELP, bears a semblance to many other such organizations across the country. The years following liberalization witnessed a marked mushrooming of NGOs in our country. The timing is crucial as that was the occasion when India played the all-embracing host to numerous multi-national companies. These companies, in turn, were the eager beavers who wanted to put their name to a cause, in

order to get the approving nod of the skeptical, newfound consumers. They did not have to go too far to look. In a country like India, all they had to do was to ask for one cause and they would get three. They went about ticking their pick and duly attaching their flashy tags onto them. Altruism was up for sale. The trend picked up and at present, India has about two million NGOs.

But with this increase, there was acceleration in numbers that followed. It was that of the watchdogs who monitored the working of these voluntary organizations. Gradually, the process of the doling out of funds also became more stringent. Several NGOs had a hard time trying to stay afloat. It seems cruel that Joseph should be compelled to forego his favourite dish for the photograph to be clicked. But when this fact is seen in the light of the above-mentioned reasons, this 'cruelty' on their part becomes more understandable. It makes clear why it was so important to them that one of 'their' children, someone who was being looked after by HELP, should get the attention of all generous hearts. As it turned out "Joseph Kumaran's five-dollar smile was actually netting HELP fifteen dollars a month." (20) We might feel that not letting Joseph take complete possession of the gifts he gets from USA is harsh and unfair. But how fair is it to keep the other children deprived of the same toys? Joseph Kumaran might be the focal point of the story, but he can't be made the centre of HELP, not without wronging all the other children in the orphanage.

It may be an interesting exercise to point out the writer's perception of life and world and to see if that can also be stretched to his story, *The Five-Dollar Smile*. On occasions, Tharoor has been found expressing his views in the following ways:

I believe the future of the world lies in states like ours (India) that promotes the co-existence of people of different languages, ethnic backgrounds and so on. ⁵

In India there is an exception to every rule, the opposite to every truth, and that opposite could also be the truth. In India there are probably as many truths as there are Indians. Everything is a question of perspective. ⁶

To conclude, we can say with a great degree of certainty that ‘everything is a question of perspective.’ It does not need to be stressed how, in today’s world, we need tolerance to be the order of the day. If only we learn to borrow the other person’s shoes every once in a while and try fitting our own feet into them, we would learn to be less judgmental. In the process, both ‘we’ and ‘they’ would be spared of the negativity and bitterness intolerance breeds. Instead of fighting with one another, therefore, we should consider others’ point of view sympathetically before jumping to a hurriedly drawn conclusion.

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The authors are indebted to **Ms Ankita Anand** working for **NCPRI** (National Campaign for People’s Right to Information) for her valuable suggestions in developing this article.

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Dalit Pride and Black Suffering in Arundati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*

Dr. Hyacinth Pink

“Caste is the monster that crosses your path
You cannot have political reform,
You cannot have economic reform,
Unless you kill this Monster”¹.

Although Arundati Roy’s² *The God of Small Things* takes place in 1969, the caste system is still present in India, especially in rural areas. The prestigious ‘Booker Prize’ awarded novel depicts this cross caste conflict. The colour on one’s body is just skin-deep, yet color consciousness has thrown up tantrums, mostly of a political nature, disturbing the social equilibrium. Dr Ambedkar³, a crusader against caste and untouchability...and a champion of an egalitarian social order writes:

“The Good Things of this earth do not fall from heaven.
Every Progress has its bill of costs,
And only those who pay for it will have that progress” (p.8)

Caste in the hands of the orthodox has been a powerful weapon for persecuting the reformers and for killing the reforms. Caste and class are viewed as the two most significant dimensions of social stratification. They are considered as closely interrelated, almost inseparable, basic processes of social life. It is one thing that ‘caste’ is viewed as a sole model for analyzing Indian society or ‘class’ is used for analyzing caste and power; but it is quite different in real life as caste and class are not only highly differentiated internally, complexities of their expression and articulation signify the vast ramifications of a structured social inequality ⁴(p.10). This caste, class and political consciousness describes a diverse strain of social theorizing that has existed since the nineteenth century and is being transformed in the second half of the twentieth century by anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, lesbian/gay, ecological, marginalized and Dalit Movements.

In a recent interview with Emily Guntheinz⁵, Arundhati Roy was asked to comment on the caste system. And this is what she said: “It’s the defining consideration in all Indian politics, in all Indian marriages...The lines are blurring. India exists in several centuries simultaneously. So there are those of us like me, or people that I know for instance, to whom it means nothing...It’s a very strange situation where there’s sort of a gap between...sometimes it’s urban and rural, but it’s really a time warp.”(p.78)

Government programs and quotas have tried to bridge this social gap by raising the standards of living for Dalits and other marginalized sections of society, by reserving places in the legislature, government jobs, and in schools and colleges. These government actions often result in an increase of violence by caste members. Urbanization, economic development, and industrialization benefit untouchables by breaking down caste barriers. In the cities of India, members of different castes are constantly in close contact and forced to interact with one another which help to weaken the strict rules of the caste system

Today ‘untouchables’ have become a strong and organized political force and take pride in not only establishing a new identity but also developing a Dalit culture for themselves as Dalits’. Like the American movements, the Dalit Panthers and the Dalit School of Literature represent a new level of pride, militancy and sophisticated creativity⁶ (p.267). The history of Dalit Sahitya (the literature of the oppressed) movement and its themes is more profoundly a part of the Mahar movement (p.269).Gangadhar Pantawane, in “Evolving a New Identity: The Development of a Dalit Culture,” defines ‘Dalitness’ thus:

“Dalitness is essentially a means towards achieving a sense of cultural identity. The inferiority complex based on “to be Dalit” has now disappeared (p:79). Now ‘Dalitness’ is a source of confrontation. This change has its essence in the desire for justice for all mankind. Dalitness is a matter of appreciating the potential of one’s total being. Thus individual, culture, social burden and Dalitness cannot be isolated... For this new Dalit individual, social and cultural freedoms have come because of his self-elevation and self-identification... Today’s Dalit literature rejects the degraded Hindu

social set-up. Dalit writers relentlessly expose the inhumanities and prejudices of caste society and instill a new social and cultural consciousness”⁷(p: 80).

For quite some time, Literature in English, for, by, and of the Dalit has taken on hues, which are **not** restricted to a simple ‘Black’ versus ‘White’ dichotomy; it is a spectrum in its own right. At one end of the spectrum are the upper castes (non-Dalits) writing about the lower castes (Dalits) and at the other is the Dalit communicating with both the Dalit and non-Dalits. Although a futile exercise, there is a tendency to segregate literature into compartments of Dalit Literature and non-Dalit Literature. From our point of view there is a perceptible distinction between a Dalits appreciation of the situation and that of a Non-Dalit. The same sensibility is not at work. The current focus in literary, cultural, and historical studies on marginalized or previously silenced discourses generates a significant concern about the critical approaches used to explore these “new” voices. An important aspect of Dalit literature is self-criticism or self-protest... they do not hesitate to attack inferiority and superiority complexes among themselves (:84). Regardless of the particular writer or literary form, Dalit literature is ultimately a declaration of independence. It is impossible to understand the revolutionary quality of Dalit literature without understanding the people to whom it is addressed. It speaks for them and to them” (:86) Mohan Dass Nameshroy’s⁸ article “Dalit Literature, Women and Religion,” in **Dalit Solidarity** spells out the aim of Dalit Literature thus :

“Primarily the aim of Dalit Literature was to highlight the disabilities and difficulties together with atrocities and inhuman treatment meted out to Dalits. The main object was to produce social awakening among the downtrodden” (pp.185-189.)

This is precisely what Arundati Roy set out to do. Roy is one of the most outstanding post –colonial Indian writer and social activists of our times. On April 4th 1997, Arundati Roy was awarded the prestigious Booker Prize, for her debut novel ‘**The God of Small Things**’. As a social activist she has been a strong voice of protest against caste and class differences and champion’s causes like equality for all mankind, the building of large dams in

India which rob thousands of their homes and livelihood. On the global stage she has written and spoken about power, powerlessness, imperialism and corporate greed. Her background as an author has given her a way with words that is unmatched. She poetically weaves metaphors and imagery into incendiary and often hilarious critiques of American foreign policy and the project of corporate globalization.

Arundati Roy was born in 1961 in the Northeastern Indian region of Bengal, to a Christian mother and Hindu father. She spent her childhood in Aymanam in Kerala, which serves as the setting for her first novel, **The God of Small Things**, under the name “Ayemenem.” Roy’s mother, Mary Roy, home-schooled her until the age of ten, when she began attending regular classes. She has been reluctant to discuss her father publicly, having spent very little time with him during her lifetime; Roy instead focuses on her mother’s influence in her life. Mary Roy, a political activist, won an unprecedented victory for women’s rights in Kerala. After her persistence, the Supreme Court granted Christian women in Kerala the right to their inheritance. Roy wrote and starred in the film, **In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones**, and also wrote the script for **Electric Moon**, directed by her second husband, Pradip Krishen. (Her first husband was Gerard Da Cunha, whom she met while in college. Their marriage lasted approximately four years.) Both films garnered a cult following, setting the stage for the fiction-writing side of Roy’s career. Even as a low-profile writer, Roy began to assert her political opinions loudly. She rallied media support for Phoolan Devi, a politician and former criminal of Robin-Hood fame, whom she felt was being misrepresented by the film, **Bandit Queen**, directed by Shekhar Kapur. After the controversy surrounding Bandit Queen subsided, Roy took time to write her first and only novel to date, **The God of Small Things**. She received an extraordinary advance of half a million pounds on the book, making its release high-profile well ahead of time. After the novel’s publication in 1997, the book won the prestigious Booker Prize, making Roy the first Indian woman and non-expatriate Indian recipient.

In addition to her novelistic skills, Roy is widely known in the political activism arena, drawing comparisons to the likes of Noam Chomsky. She has published many works of nonfiction including several essays as well as: **The End of Imagination (1998)**, **The Greater Common Good (1999)**, **The Cost of Living (1999)**, **Power Politics (2002)**, **War Talk (2003)**, **The Checkbook** and **The Cruise Missile (2004**, with David Barsamian), and **Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire (2004)**. She also took part in the June 2005 World Tribunal on Iraq. In January 2006 she was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for her collection of essays, ‘**The Algebra of Infinite Justice**’, but declined to accept it. Roy has endured accusations of being “Anti-American” and even convicted of contempt of court by the New Delhi Supreme Court for her political activism, but is relentless in it. As proof, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004 for her efforts toward social justice and peaceful conflict resolution. Roy continues to write, speak out, and live with her husband in New Delhi.

Arundhati Roy’s **The God of Small Things** presents the family history of an entomologist who on superannuation from Central Government service settles down at his native place, Ayemenem, a small town in the Kottayam district of Kerala. The novel moves through almost the lives of almost all the members of the entomologist. Pappachi’s family and weaves various events of each member’s life into a pattern highlighting degeneration in contemporary social class of a particular region. The dominant note that surfaces in the plot is the strained man-woman relationships. Adjustment and mutual harmony among the family members depend on observance of established family practices, customs and traditional values. Ammu, Pappachi’s divorced daughter is seen throwing all family practices to the winds. She exhibits a scintillating urgency of desire in her sexual escapades, with Velutha ... a man socially ostracized and persecuted.

In Arundhati Roy’s **The God of Small Things**, suffering becomes an environment, which is identified with the collective fate of the Dalit community; while pride is what inspires Velutha,

her protagonist to pursue his separate dream. Roy presents both the miserable plight of untouchables and also the struggle of a woman's fulfillment in life in a patriarchal society. Velutha, the untouchable protagonist in **The God of Small Things** transgresses the established norms of society by daring to fall in love with a woman of high caste. The ultimate outcome of this tragic love affair is the tragic death of the "untouchable" by the "touchable boots" "of the State Police, an event that makes a travesty of the idea of God...God is no more in control of "small things" rather the small things have an ultimate power over God, turning him to the "God of loss" (p.265)

The idea of untouchability is explored at two levels in the novel - the social untouchables who are deprived of basic human rights (the Paravans) and the metaphoric untouchables in high castes. This conflict exists at individual and societal levels. The novel depicts graphically the helplessness of individuals to resolve these levels of friction. Velutha, the outcaste, can never live in peaceful coexistence with the 'touchables' as long as this social stigma is attached to him and his fold. In spite of being "highly intelligent", an excellent carpenter with an engineer's mind, he is portrayed as "the god of loss", "the god of small things", because "he left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no images in mirrors". (p.265). In direct contrast to Velutha stands Chacko, who gets away with his debauchery or his 'man's needs' as his mother puts in - because he is a touchable. Roy rightly states "Change is one thing ... Acceptance is another" (p.279). The society presented in the novel is patriarchal. On the one hand we have a set of characters - Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, and Kochu Maria who perpetuate the division of caste, race and gender. On the other hand we have Ammu, and the twins, Estha and Rahel, who consciously and unconsciously resist their hierarchies. Ammu, the biggest victim of the system, is an archetypal image of a daughter marginalized in a patriarchal society. "Perhaps Ammu, Estha and Rahel were the worst transgressors. They all broke the rules. They all crossed the forbidden territory. They all tampered with laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much" (p.31) Ammu is

perhaps the most marginalized too and suffers only a marginalized existence in the family structure. With little importance placed in educating a daughter and marriage as the only option; Ammu marries the first proposal that comes to her door and is forced to turn away from a drunken husband unable to support his family. A divorce forces her to return to Ayemenem. Any attempt to see her life independently threatens the existing order. She is double or even triply marginalized: first at the hands of caste based society because she married outside her community; second as a divorcee, segregated by and within her own family and not permitted to partake at the centre of family functions ("at Sophie Mol's funeral she and the twins were made to stand separately not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them" (p.5). and third, as a woman struggling to come to terms with her own life and in a patriarchal society. Estha's conflict within himself turns him into a silent creature. But in his inside "there is an uneasy Octopus that lived and squirted its inky tranquilizer on his past." (p.12)

This injustice is perpetrated by a group of the characters who are themselves victims of some sort of social injustice. Mammachi, Ammu's mother, who endured her husband's abusive attitude, ignores Chako's sexual exploitation of the female workers but could not tolerate her daughter's love for a Paravan. Baby Kochamma, the defender of the system, would go to any limit to save the so-called family honour. The novel depicts the processes of creating and labeling Paravans within the high class families - the people who go beyond the unwritten laws of society in pursuit of happiness. Velutha, the Dalit protagonist fills the lacunae in Ammu's, Estha's and Rahel's lives both in the society and in the family.

As a young boy, Velutha used to come with his father to the back entrance of the Chacko House to deliver coconuts. (Pappachi didn't allow untouchables into the house.) Mammachi noticed Velutha's remarkable ability with his hands when he was eleven and therefore persuaded Vellya Paapen to send him to the Untouchable's school which her father had built. At fourteen Velutha began working with Johann Klein in his workshop. Everyday after school he would travel by bus to Kottayam for

work and return only at night. At the age of sixteen Velutha finished his school and was also an accomplished carpenter. He had his own set of carpentry tools and the sensibility of a German designer. Apart from his carpentry skills, he also understood machines. His expertise caused him to be put in charge of general maintenance.

Velutha was a Paravan with a difference. He did not behave as a Paravan is supposed to behave. Velutha's presence is unsettling to many who believe he acts above his station. Unlike other untouchables, Velutha had a self-assured air and had become indispensable at the pickle factory where he worked. Even his father Vellya Paapen feared for him. He couldn't say what it was that frightened him. "Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation. An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel" (73).

Vellya Paapen had the sensation that his son had qualities and characteristics that were perfectly acceptable and even desirable in Touchables but should and could not in a Paravan. He carried with him the perpetual impurity of his caste. Vellya Paapen feared what this might do to his future and cautioned him. But this was something that he could not justify credibly and concretely to his son; he failed to; so he failed to convince him and this resulted in frequent fights and thereby put a sunder to relationships between father and son, which forced Velutha to disappear for periods of time sometimes even years...yet each time he appeared he was reinstated at Ayemenem. This brought about the envy and jealousy and consequent anger from his work force as Paravans were not supposed to be carpenters. Not meant to be rehired. Consequently he was paid 'less than a touchable carpenter but more than a Paravan'. He was supposed to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premise and touched things that touchables touched...a big leap for a Paravan. Since Velutha had returned a great friendship grew between him and the twins, Rahel and Estha. He spent a lot of time teaching them to fish and mend

the boat they found. The twins looked up to Velutha for everything. He was their childhood hero.

One day when the twins were playing with Velutha, Ammu watching them realizes that Velutha had changed so much. .

"It was his smile that reminded Ammu of Velutha as a little boy, helping Vellya Paapen to count coconuts. Holding out little gifts he had made for her, flat on the palm of his hand so that she could take them without touching him. Boats, boxes, small windmills. Calling her Ammukutti. Little Ammu. Though she was so much less little than he was. When she looked at him now, she couldn't help thinking that the man he had become bore so little resemblance to the boy he had been. His smile was the only piece of baggage he had carried with him from boyhood into manhood. (p.175)

She began to notice how his body had become a man's body and was passionately attracted to him. Slowly and unconsciously she was beginning to realize that a reckless rage of passion was battling inside her. This eventually led her to love by night Velutha, the man her children loved by day.

"The ridges of muscle in Velutha's stomach grow taught and raise under his skin like the division in the slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body has changed so quietly, from a flat muscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer carpenter's body. Polished with a high wax body polished. He had high cheek bones and white, sudden smile." (p.175)

A large part of the novel is concerned with the point of view of Ammu, the mother of the twins. Her point of view expresses her secret passions and isolations, trials and tribulations, her fears and certainties, her dreams and desires, reality, her myth and reality. The early passages of the novel deal with her unfortunate marriage, her divorce and arrival at Ayemenem House. Her point of view also depicts her restlessness after divorce, the tussel between the mother and the lover in her. When she meets Velutha, she is attracted by his muscular body. Her depressed sexual passions begin to take root and culminate in the sexual union. In chapter 11, a short but significant chapter Ammu dreams of the one armed lover which symbolically suggests Velutha. 'One armed' suggests the helplessness and degraded social status of the untouchable character, Velutha. Ammu symbolically dreams:

“That afternoon Ammu travels upwards through a dream in which a cheerful man with one arm held her close by the light of an oil lamp. He had no other arm with which to fight the shadows that flicked around him on the floor. Shadows that only he could see.” (p. 215)

Here the term ‘Shadows’ suggests the dark, cruel and monstrous law of society which never permits an untouchable to love; never allows him to cross the age old tradition of the so called morality. Ammu regularly meets Velutha in darkness along the riverbank- a symbol of division between the two classes. When the truth of Ammu’s love for a Paravan is made known to the entire family, she is locked away while hatred for Velutha grows throughout the entire family. Mammachi, who was responsible for educating and employing Velutha, spits in his face. Even Chacko who is a strong communist is enraged. Velutha’s father offers to kill his own son for his audacity to love an upper caste. When the State police find him, they beat him to death accusing him of raping Ammu; threatening the family, trying to kidnap the children and the death of Sophie Mol. All these crimes were manipulated –a conspiracy of sorts, leading to his death for no sin of his own but because he dared to love an upper caste and there violated both the “love laws” and the “caste laws” Whenever an untouchable is accused for any crime, the touchables thronged to remove him forever Roy depicts this in the novel. “A posse of touchable policemen crossed the Meenachal River.” (p.304) when they found Velutha, he was asleep. They treated him thus inhumanly. “They wake Velutha with their boots.” (p.307) Estha and Rahel were near by Velutha. and witnessed this barbaric incident:

“They realized the man that was beaten was Velutha. They heard the thud on wood on flesh. Boot on bone. On teeth ...the muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man’s breath when his lung is torn by the jagged end of a broken rib.” (p.308)

Yet the crime was not even proved, it was only charged, but the touchable police had brutally treated the accused untouchable as a murderer! “Half an hour past midnight death

come for him.” (p.320) In this cross caste love affair, Ammu was not entrapped by Velutha. Willingly she had submitted herself, but the Hindu dominated Indian Society would not allow the affair. Both of them had paid the highest price – the cost for living. Velutha was beaten to death and Ammu’s family scattered. The climax of Ammu’s misery was the malicious behavior of the Christian Inspector, Thomas Mathew. When she reached the Kottayam Police station to reveal the truth about Sophie’s death and save Velutha, nobody noticed her. But the police inspector Mathew, tapping her breasts with his baton, said; “the Kottayam police station did not take statements from Vaishayas or illegitimate children.”(p.8). She had not done anything wrong but loved an untouchable, and consequently she became an untouchable Vaishya whose breasts can be touched. Touched by a baton! It makes a powerful statement that the Christian minority in India also tries to flatter and please the Hindu majority by hating and persecuting the Untouchables. Caste consciousness was originally present only in Hinduism; it was adopted by other religions and has now become more of a social phenomenon than a religious convention, as in Kerala.

The God of Small Things concludes with the premise that the illicit love affair of Ammu and Velutha are not blessed by the big God (Society). Ammu and Velutha were concerned with the “small things” in life knowing that there was nowhere for them to go, no future, nothing (p.320)...living for them was sticking to smallness. But “the little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleach bones of a story.”(p.32) In Arundhati Roy’s novel, the laws of India’s caste system is broken by the characters of Ammu and Velutha, an Untouchable or Paravan. Hindus believe that being an untouchable is punishment for having been bad in a former life. By being good and obedient, an untouchable can obtain a higher rebirth. Velutha’s lack of complacency causes him many problems throughout the novel. “It was not entirely his fault that he lived in a society where a man’s death could be more profitable than his life had ever been” (p.267). Although he is a dedicated

member of the Marxist Party, his untouchable status makes other party members dislike him, and so the local Party leader Comrade K.N.M. Pillai would be more politically successful without him.

Ammu and Velutha are victims of History and the pernicious caste system. **The God of Small Things** is not just the embodiment of the twins' consciousness. It has a design and a purpose. It seeks to spell out through its inflexions the paths and fear of the life of a family victimized by History and convention. The novel addresses itself to the issues of human relations in a racial context in Capitalism. The double consciousness, which W.E.B. DuBois diagnosed as the root cause of black suffering, is internalized in the very structure of her novel. Both the river and Ayemenem House are enclosed locations, the geographic setting presiding over its inhabitants as an impersonal destiny. On closer examination it can be seen that this destiny is an extension of the capitalistic frame work of modern Indian society which corrupts individual dreams. Roy, by placing her individual characters in such graphically defined geographic settings has been able to bring out the dialectic of contradiction that operates between the separate dreams pursued by the members of the community and its collective destiny which is in the hands of Historical forces. The very factors which contribute towards the economic progress of the Dalits (in this case Velutha), undermined their identity.

In Arundhati Roy's **The God of Small Things** suffering becomes an environment, which is identified with the collective fate of the Dalit community, while pride is what inspires Velutha, her protagonist to pursue his separate dream. **The God of Small Things** addresses itself to the issues of human relations in a racial context in Capitalism. The double consciousness, which W.E.B. DuBois diagnosed as the root cause of black suffering, is internalized in the very structure of her novel. Both the river and Ayemenem House are enclosed locations, the geographic setting presiding over its inhabitants as an impersonal destiny. On closer examination it can be seen that this destiny is an extension of the capitalistic frame work of modern Indian society which corrupts individual dreams. Roy, by placing her individual characters in

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The division between the touchable and untouchables is so ingrained in Kerala society that Velutha is seen as a nonhuman: If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship, and connection between themselves and him, any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature—had been severed long ago. (p.293) When Velutha has an affair with Ammu, he breaks an ancient taboo and incurs the wrath of Ammu's family and the Kerala police. He breaks the rigid social rules of the caste system and therefore, the authorities must punish him. Roy describes the policemen's violent actions as being done out of fear, "...civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness." (p.292).

In **The God of Small Things** the physical setting of Ayemenem is an ominous, uneasy presence, which erupts into violence towards the end. The murder of Velutha at the end does not surprise us because the haunting feeling of an impending catastrophe has been a part of the novel's atmosphere from the very beginning. Roy has been able to verbalize the anxieties of the silent Dalit minority Velutha who finds himself hot in the deep contradictions of capitalism with none of the survival strategies of the majority upper casts at its command.

A closer look at **The God of Small Things** will help us identify the nature of these contradictions. While each resident of Ayemenem House has his/her own dreams, the pride derived from her dream isolates her. The novel is a story of a dream differed or a quest interrupted in the final orgy of violence that overtakes Ayemenem house and spells its doom. The individual's pride and his separate dream become intricately entangled. What sets **The God of Small Things** apart from other novels is the fact that Arundhati Roy charts the inevitable suffering and impossible

dreams of the community through the origin growth and the final disintegration of a place. While the Chacko's who once lived in Ayemenem house has now become prosperous and successful, Velutha who takes shelter there becomes stranded forever. Ayemenem seems to know that unlike its other children the few who would leave forever were to be the exception rather than the rule since they came because they had no choice and would remain for the same reason. Ayemenem takes shape out of the scars of the survivors and the anxieties of the victims. The women who lived there are either unemployed or under employed. Ayemenem's house affords them a social sanctuary between the street and the comforts of the functional middle class home. But this sanctuary is also a prison or an asylum and for the retarded and the weak. The prominent brick wall that separates Ayemenem house from the river makes it an emblem of women's and caste struggles and dreams, as well as pride and suffering and symbolizes the monstrous face of dehumanizing racism.

Aijaz Ahmad⁹ observes that despite the fine writing, the evocative descriptions, there is something formulaic about it. The inter-caste affair and the death of a child that lies at the heart of the book are very predictable and the love affair is not plausible, it does not spring from either the characterisation or the needs of the story. There is a sense of manipulation by the author and he thinks that the incest scene at the end was unnecessary but probably, it was one of the things that people look for nowadays & which make for a successful book. The masturbation of the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man by Estha is one of these so-called necessary components of a successful book. In this connection it must be said that Roy handles the sex scene between Ammu and Velutha with artistry. Nevertheless, Ammu's affair with the untouchable is wholly implausible, the more so because Roy does not bother to develop the relationship, it is suddenly sprung on us and we cannot imagine the motivation.

But irrespective of that, Roy's art is both realistic and mythic likewise her vivid earthy characters seem constantly on the verge of breaking out into magical powers. What keeps Roy's narrative

intact is the vigour and the resonance of her language. Much of her affirmation comes from the buoyancy of her style which negates the vision of the Black hell she reveals. What Roy exposes is the corrupt foundations of the social edifice which sets illusory goals for Velutha's community. Roy is a tragic artist who feels that only a revolution in consciousness can save Velutha and his community from eminent disaster.

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My mother, me and my daughter!

Sanam Noor

In this ancient land, everything has changed, so has Marvi—the legendary heroin of Sindh, the symbol of chastity, the honour protector of the family. The Marvi of ‘once upon a time’ who was abducted by Umar, longed for her parents, her land, and her people. Today’s Marvi has been abducted by her own people; she longs for distance, not companionship. Maleer has become a prison where she cannot move at her own will, where her chastity is put to test everyday, every night, every moment. This is today’s Marvi, waiting for an Umar who will take her away from the suspicious eyes...and minds; who will bring back her freedom and above all the jewel which has been taken away by her own people—her honour. But...→

Me and my daughter: The present tense Karachi

It was after a long interlude that Khala Razia had come to see Amman—her niece—and the reason was announcement of Fiza’s engagement with Saen Rafiq’s son Mian Ahmed (aka nandho wadero¹). Though Khala Razia had been planning the visit for a long time, the arrangement brought along a perfect occasion to call on her favourite niece.

‘Fiza is such a lucky girl. I happened to have a glimpse of Nandho Wadero only few days back. By God, he’s become so handsome of late; and the way he curved his moustaches; he really looked like a real wadero.’ Khala went on with the praise. Only few months back the same lady had drawn a horrible picture of ‘the handsome guy’ before Mai Sahiba who was considering his proposal for her daughter. ‘You cannot imagine how gruesome man he’s grown up to be. By God, he’s surpassed the cruelty of his father Saen Rafiq. And the way he curves his moustaches simply adds to the disgust his whole persona transmits.’ But Mai Sahiba’s husband Shamsoo had already rejected the proposal, so obviously there was no need to make the family change their mind.

Although I despised to show off myself when guests call on Amman jee, I had to fulfil the mandatory formality of at least greeting Khala Razia. ‘Salam Khala’. Khala did not return my salam but passed me an insipid smile. That was her usual way. Ignoring my presence, she resumed her eulogy for nandho wadero and his family. ‘How is Fiza? Is she happy?’ *Only I knew how happy she was.* Without waiting for Amman’s answer, she replied herself. ‘I know she’s very happy. I always knew you would marry Fiza as soon as she completes *Matiriki*². You don’t know how much I praise your upbringing of your daughters. You are a perfect mother. After all you are *my* sister’s daughter.’

That was enough. I could not bear more of such gossip. As Amman kept on nodding and listening and smiling, my mind kept looking for some excuse to leave. ‘Saiqa, bring some dry fruit for Khala from the kitchen.’ The excuse appeared itself and I did not wait to abide by.

What perfect mother is Amman. When I become a mother I will show them how to be one. They did not bother to ask Fiza whether she wanted to marry that horrible man, wrongly called nandho wadero. My daughter; what would be her name; whatever, would complete her education. She would go to college and maybe university. She wont be kept in a cage like this. I would grant her the freedom to sigh, to choose and to live. I wont even mind if she goes to a co-education school. She would be permitted to call on her good friends once in a while, but besides that she would be a girl who would respect herself and would know how to make others respect her. She would become a symbol of confidence, a role model for other girls in the family, and the village.

Standing still in the kitchen I had created the whole world where I could now clearly see my would-be-daughter. The prospect was promising and gave me an uncanny feeling of rejoice. As my brain cells now offered a clearer glance of future, the whispers of Khala and Amman coming from the drawing room impeded the imaginative process where my daughter was being personified. The whispers kept emerging; the whispers which I had known since my childhood. I could not make sense of what

was being said, but I knew what it was all about. “They must be regretting or cherishing the fact that while the elder sister remained un-married and un-engaged, the younger sister was to be married soon. So what, it doesn’t matter. These people cannot go beyond that thinking. It really doesn’t matter.’ I made myself understand. But it *did* matter. My concentration diverted from my would-be-daughter, to the whispers of the two ladies. The whispers which I believed were about myself, which I understood but was not actually listening to. Those sound waves which reached me now took the shape of words being formulated in my mind—and now I could clearly listen to the exact words. ‘I never wanted to keep her at home among my innocent daughters but Saen never listened to me. He insisted whatever happened, the “fact remains that Saiqa is my daughter, and hence my honour. And I cannot let my izzat³ stay out of home. She would remain in our house... forever”.’

These words were not auditory hallucination. These were the words I had grown up with. I listened to them in silence and now I was used to their usage time and again. But still it *did* matter.

The mother: the past and future tense

Shah Jo Goth

It was a hot and humid night at Shah Jo Goth. The whole village had worn an unusual silence. For Fehmida it was a dark night. A *kari raat*⁴. It was the night which was to decide whether she was going to see the light of the day. Reclining in an uneasy position on the charpoy, she could hardly breathe. She had not been able to let her upper eyelids meet their lower counterparts for longer—now for the last two hours. It felt strange to spend the night at her paternal home after three years of her marriage to Saen Inayat. The surrounding silence gave the impression as if no living being was around. But she consoled herself by assuming that everyone at home was waking but pretending to be asleep. And she was right. Her sister and mother, the only older family members present in the house, were sleeping with their eyes wide

open. These six eyes were anticipating the worst to happen in the next few hours; but hoping at the same time that it won’t happen.

A thought perturbed Mai Saeeda, Fehmida’s mother, and she left the bed in a hasty manner. In another room, she approached the place where Quran was kept at a higher place, put off her chaadar from head, wrapped it around her neck, held it with her hands that now clapped together and started praying in a low voice. This low voice appeared very loud in that stillness. It added to the tension that the other two ladies were going through. Faiqa, Fehmida’s sister stood up and looked at her lovely younger sister who was to be murdered by the orders of jirga.⁵ Leaving Fehmida’s infant daughter in bed, Faiqa approached the woman who was now called a *kari*. Fehmida’s open eyes conveyed as if they had given up after struggling hard finding sleep. She started singing the lullaby which she used to sing to little Fehmida some twenty years ago, whenever she had problem with sleep...

Allah Allahoo. Allah Saen minhji Fehmi kbe nindra karae. Allah Allahoo. Allah Saen minhji Fehmi kbe subrin jwanu kares; Allah Allahoo...’

‘O Lord, make my Fehmi sleep, O Lord make my Fehmi grow young and beautiful. O Lord...’

The two sisters hugged each other and cried with a volume gradually increasing. They became louder and louder. The praying mother also joined in the chorus from where she stood and now more rigorously sought Allah Almighty’s favours. His favours to save her young and innocent daughter’s life. Moments later, the two sisters were sitting in silence. While the mother banged the doors of Heaven, the main gate of the house received forceful knocks and then kicks. A bunch of armed and courageous men entered the house who were on a mission to purge their family from this breathing *black* stain. This followed famine shrieks, shrieks of three women who took turns in bagging and struggling for life. But none of the brave men heeded; or got trounced. A tall man held Fehmida by her hair and looked directly into her eyes. He wanted to see fear in these eyes, the eyes which had

earned the family so much of disrespect, the eyes which had dared to look at a gher mard. He saw it in them and shut them forever. What remained now were the cries of a new-born baby...of Fehmida's infant daughter Saiqa.

My future: the present continuous tense?

Shah Jo Goth

This time Amman was less worrisome. She had had experience of marrying off one of her two (maybe three) daughters. This time she knew what mistakes not to repeat in order to avoid some minor mismanagement as were experienced during Fiza's wedding. First of all, she sat with Kinza's would-be-mother-in-law and fixed all the occasions to avoid any confusion. Secondly, the service of caterers was hired this time from a nearby town to save domestic items from misplacement. The ritual of engagement was set to be performed on the day of *wanmah*⁶ when Kinza would sit in the corner of a room for 5 or 6 days and eat no spices, only boiled, salty meals.

As usual the bride's in-laws were responsible for arranging meals to be served on all major occasions. What Baba had to arrange was some dowry most of which had already been made available. A day before nikah, furniture for Kinza was bought from city and taken to Shah Jo Goth, where the ceremony was taking place.

In a triumphant manner Baba announced in the harem the arrival of furniture and asked the ladies to go inside rooms. After the *khadims* placed it in the room where all dowry was displayed, Baba asked Amman, Fiza and I to come and have a look. Fiza was busy with her baby so she excused and Amman and I followed Baba.

With a smile on his face, he inquired us about his choice. Amman was of course delighted with another expansive and exquisite addition to her daughter's dowry. I could only give him a smile with that usual fear in my eyes whenever Baba confronted me. Baba used to avoid looking into my eyes, the eyes which

perhaps reminded him of my mother; I too used to avoid it but just to hide the plans that lay in. Baba again wanted not to see me in the eyes but this time our eyes met, and ...there was no more fear in my eyes...it was something else which I couldn't know but the way Baba looked at me, it felt as if he was reading 'what' it was. But I was no more afraid...not this time.

is it really Marvi who has changed or her Marooara⁷ ? Is that her men folk have stopped giving her the love, the respect which used to make her long for them, to die for them...and now which make her fear and only fear in the name of honour. Who has changed? The daughter or the son of this land?

1. Younger landlord.
2. Metric
3. Honour.
4. Kari: Black/ Dark; Raat: night.
5. Local, tribal court.
6. A ceremony prior to marriage after which the bride has to remain secluded for a certain time behind a veil and has to eat selective food.
7. Family, parents.

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Music for Peace : From Mizo Aspect

Dr. R.L.Thanmawia

Man has continually searched for, and rendered efforts towards the creation of an ideal world. In the process he has constructed homes, improved architectural designs, and developed social skills. Social values have therefore been central and they have distinguished man from other aspects of creation. All social institutions, down the ages, have held life to be sacred. As such values have been cherished in terms of festivals, religions and social activities. Of those values *Peace* must have been the one that man applaud in his heart all the time, and due to this social valued, the person who propagates peace has held high esteem in all the society.

Music on the other hand is an eloquent language that allows us to express what is happening around us. It is becoming a more integral part of every day life, and it plays an important role in promoting human well being. Music is powerful as it facilitates communication which goes beyond words, enables meanings to be shared, and promotes peace and harmony in the midst of diversity. It is infact, the vehicle of peace. Music, singing and dancing are the ambassadors of peace to human races. In other words, we can say that peace and harmony manifested in the form of music, singing and dancing.

Music can unite people, empower communication, break down barriers because it is a powerful means of participation. It is an universal language that can negotiate peace and tranquillity. The ambitious plan of Aaron Shneyer is to unite Israeli and Palestinian high school youth and turn them into a recording and performing band through his project Heartbeat: Jerusalem. There are 12 members in the band including Muslim, Christian and Jewish high school students. "The kids are coming together and are focusing on writing music and getting into what the music they are writing means," Shneyer tells ISRAEL21c. "They are becoming comfortable with each other and are now just crossing into the territory of getting into the conflict". (Kloosterman:1). Shneyer

firmly believes that music can build trust amid the scepticism and break down wall of fear. He writes, "Music, unlike any other medium, has a marked ability to bring people together, strengthen voices and inspire hope in the darkest of places."(ibid).

Apart from Shneyer, there are institutions that focus the potential of music as an educational means of achieving peace in the society. They use music to reconstruct social realities and help distance the younger generation from violence. Some other organisations used music to promote interpersonal communication on various levels. Alba Sanfeliu says, "Music tries to break down these barriers and make itself an element of reconciliation between cultures that seem to have irreconcilable differences." (Sanfeliu:7)

If look into the history of Mizo, one must acknowledge that one of the forces which shape Mizo life for nearly three hundred centuries were the frequent wars with the neighbouring tribes or the wars among themselves. Whenever a male child was born in a village, the elders would come to see him and would bless him so that he would be endowed with bravery in order to kill enemies and wild animals. A Mizo youth cherished to be brave as this was desired of him by the elders in the society. All the young men were expected to stay the night at *Zawlbuk*. *Zawlbuk* played an important role in the life of the village, and the community as a whole. It acted as a village guard room. This was obvious for a hunting and warring people. They had to occasionally fight to protect their village against external aggression from the neighbouring village. The noted chivalry among the youngsters is honoured by offering **Nopui**, a special cup for rice beer. But it is amazing that the Mizos regarded themselves as the peace loving people.

The recent history also tells that after a great twenty years of turbulent in the state, peace agreement was at last signed in 1986 between the underground MNF and the Central government. Therefore, their history and the political development occurred during the twentieth century testify against the proclamation of being the peaceful society. However, the politicians are fond of proclaiming that Mizoram is the most peaceful state in India. Not only local politicians, but important

dignitaries who visited the state often remarked Mizoram as the most peaceful state.

There may be one reason to another, but the most important credible according to my mind is their love for music which creates peace among themselves. I would like to say that obviously music alone won't bring the state at peace, but considering the nature of the whole society credit must go to music. The people by nature, love music, and they love singing. Some writers as such remarked as the "singing tribe". Without music, the life of the Mizo is incomplete. B.Thanmawia says, "Music to the Mizo, is as indispensable as air is to man and beasts"(1985:12). This statement may be too strong, but their love for music is the fact. They sing on all happy and despairing occasions. When condoling bereaved family, they sing the songs of condolence for the whole day and night. When attending marriage party, they sing a song of joyous. They even sing or hum tunes while they are working or walking on the roads. Kathryn Mc Kenzie remarks, "the sound of their harmonious singing and the haunting rhythm of their tribal songs can often be heard"(1986:19).

A survey of Mizo names indicates that great many of the names are derivatives of traditional musical instruments like *Dar* (Gong), *Khuang* (Drum), *Zai* (Sing) *Rem* (accompanying music), *Ri* (musical sound). Some of the popular names are as follows:

Dar (Gong): *Darchhawna*, *Darlana*, *Darlawma*, *Darhmingthanga*, *Darchhunga*, *Darpuii*, *Darliahthangi*, *Darhanpuii* etc.

Khuang (drum): *Khuangliana*, *Khuanglawma*, *Khuangtuaha*, *Khuangchhunga*,

Zai (to sing): *Zairema*, *Zaikunga*, *Zaithanga*, *Zailiana*, *Zaithanpuii*, *Zaithmingthanga*

In the olden days, the Mizo used to celebrate a new song or songs. It is said that one day, a cicada sings beautifully at *Lungdawh*, the platform at the entrance of the village while the villagers were about to work in the jhum. On hearing the sweet song of the cicada, no one could go one, and all the villagers gathered waiting for Saikuti, the poetess of the village. When Saikuti arrived, they immediately requested her to compose a song on that cicada. She then spontaneously recited the following verses-

*Oh, thou cicada of the wood,
Your sweet voice of no rhythm,
Enchanted people from their works*

On hearing this verse, the villagers went back and sang together the whole day in celebrating to the new song.

From time immemorial, the Mizo have been using different musical instruments. Most of the Mizo indigenous instruments which are used at the time of festivals and dances are striking instruments such as different types of *Khuang*, *Dar*, *Bengbung*, *Seki* and *Talbkhuang*. They have six varieties of Wind-instruments like *Rawchhem*, *Tumphit*, *Mautawtawrawt*, *Phenglawng*, *Buhchangkuang*, *Hnabtum*; and three kinds of stringed-instruments such as *Tingtang*; *Lemlawi* and *Tuiumdar*. All the striking-instruments except *Bengbung* are used for group singing or on the festive occasions; while all the three kinds of stringed-instruments are played by individual. Out of six from wind-instruments only two are meant for public.

But these indigenous musical instruments are very simple and crude in comparison to other Indian musical instruments and they are out-dated when compared to modern musical instruments. May be due to this reason, *Khuang* (drum) is the only Mizo traditional musical instrument that is popularly used till today. In traditional practice, *Khuang* has no role in the religious functions; but today the use of drum is a must in very church service. The six stringed guitar was introduced during the third decade of the twentieth century. It has now become part and parcel of the Mizo society. Almost all the boys know how to play guitar. The guitar has replaced the traditional musical instruments at all levels except at the religious functions. Therefore, it has become a bosom friend of the modern Mizo youths.

Stringed instruments were a companion to human beings since time immemorial. The first type of string instrument was a simple musical bow. The Harp is the oldest known stringed instrument. No one really knows where the harp originated. One of the earliest musical instrument discoveries showed a harp-like instrument on rock paintings dating back to 15,000 BC in France. Meanwhile in Egypt, some of the earliest images of bow harps

are from the Pharaoh's tombs dating some 5,000 years ago. (www.alisonvardy.com/harp-info/early-harp-history.htm.)

The Mizo people became familiar to the western musical instruments only by the twentieth century. The first western musical instruments entering Mizoram were the mouth organ and the full Organ brought by a missionary's wife, Mrs. Fraser in 1907. But Dr. & Mrs. Fraser returned to England after a few years stay in Mizoram, and the local youth had no time to learn to play those instruments.

After a long recess of more than ten years, Mizo youth became acquainted with the modern musical instruments in 1925. Vankhama (1906-1970) was one of the notable pioneers who cultivated the seed of the modern musical instruments in the heart of Mizo youth. He began his poetic career at the age of eighteen, that is from 1924, and he was also one of the pioneers of modern Mizo love songs called *Lengzem*, but most of his lyrical songs were composed between 1930-1945 (Mizo Poetry.113). In 1925 Vankhama entered High School in Calcutta city. One day while he was aimlessly strolling along the road, he heard a beautiful orchestra played by a Band under the leadership of John Phillips near Esplanade. He immediately stopped walking and seriously listened to that beautiful music. Being a lover of music by nature, Vankhama did not return from the musical world to his studies. He then purchased a Violin and practised it by himself without having an instructor. But he was confident in handling it and soon became an expert in that particular instrument. He introduced the Violin to the Mizo youth. The following year, that is in 1926, Violin and Hawaiian Guitar entered Mizoram along with Vankhama. The two new instruments were very much appreciated by the local people. Vankhama soon formed a music group called *Fawm Chanp Pawl*. They performed music at different meetings and conferences in and around Aizawl town. (*Lallianzuala, p.44*).

His daughter Vanhlupuii also remarks, "...thanks to lady missionaries such as Pi Sandy and Pi Zaii who taught solfa, singing, the existing native musical talent was much enriched. My father Vankhama too, had the happy fortune of receiving his music

lessons from them and which enabled him later, to win his musical trophies. This must have greatly enthused him for, during his student days at Calcutta and Shillong, he developed a deep love for classical music and on his return home, had mastered the violin." (Music- A Channel of Peace, p.1)

In 1937 a Spanish guitar was imported to Mizoram. The nomenclature of the first music group was then changed to *Tingtang Zai pawl*. The guitar is the one that the Mizo youths really cherished and loved. They sing and cry, they scream and shriek, they weep and trill along with their new companion, the Spanish Guitar. Like a beautiful girl, the Mizo boys in particular, adored and were devoted to it. Their attachment and passion was very much profound and vivid which can be seen from their lyrical songs. Some of the Mizo craftsmen soon produced different sizes of guitars that within a short time, even the people of remote areas became familiar with the Guitar. And with the coming of the Spanish guitar, awakening of love lyrics and other themes came into being.

To most of the Mizo youth, Guitar is their life. They keep it with due care and keep it in the safest place in their house. They can sing happily at all times and at all places. They bring it when they visit their girl friends at night and they sing songs together. Even after they leave the girl's house, the boys continue to sing in the open courtyard till late night. They bring the guitar even in the jhum. It is, infact, their close friend and their life, their soul and their spirit. Their thought form and poetic imagery manifested in their lyrical songs are often communicated through the guitar.

Ancient Greeks believed that the god muse of music who gave poems to human beings, and therefore they regarded it as sacred and those who were not given the gift were not entitled to write such poetry. However, the most prominent source of lyrical songs for the Mizo is no other than the guitar. The beautiful environment has been a source of inspiration to music writers; there seems to be no other better source of inspiration than nature itself. But, the feeling of nostalgia that has sowed the seed for a song needs something like the rain for its germination and that is the guitar.

Its not only the gentlemen who love the guitar, ladies are also fond of it and those who are very fond of the guitar are quite attached to it. A very young girl who isn't considered old enough to be sentimental has this very old and battered guitar which she carefully and lovingly place at the foot of her bed; it is her companion after her evening games with her friends. One night, the moon was achingly beautiful and bright. The children started to disperse after the evening game, and this little girl like on any other night, embraced her guitar and started to learn from it. That night, she wasn't just learning to play the instrument, but she started on a journey to the realm of music. Her best friend, the guitar, took her to a world she had never been before. Even though she wasn't considered old enough to write a song nor had she even given it a thought, she started to write a song with the help of her best friend the guitar. It was purely her song that came out from within. This young girl, whom her friends and relatives dearly call "Maduhi" is RTC Lalduhawmi.

After six years, Maduhi became a teenage girl and with her best friend the guitar, she wrote twelve songs altogether. She shows her appreciation in the lines:

Indeed I give you thanks,

My little beautiful guitar (Perhkhbuang Tingtang)

Rokunga who was declared Poet of the Century by the Government of Mizoram, has said that Mizo young men and young ladies who are in the stage of dating are merry and to highlight their merriment, even if it's rainy or sunny or even if the mosquitoes are biting them, these young people will say "We are Mizo and we should be joyous." He continues to urge them to work any thing any time with singing in the rythm of music. He feels that to uplift the happy atmosphere the music plays an important role and it creates a feeling of perseverance and the willingness to work under any circumstances.

Vankhama composed a song when his beloved guitar which had given him much pleasure and with which he had sung many songs till late at night, was bought from him by certain close acquaintances while he was going home towards

Shillong from the army. And he bids farewell to his guitar with the following lines,

O you valourous youth facing your foes

Let this music make you merry and please you;

Return gloriously with victory. (Perhkhbuang, L 13-15)

Towards the beginning of the Gulf War, some artistes flew to the desert of Saudi Arabia to entertain the American soldiers posted there for the war. Even right after the war, some artistes entered Iraq to cheer up these soldiers. Eighty years ago, for a group of young Mizo men who were about to be in combat in the great World War, Vankhama sacrificed his beloved and treasured guitar in order to encourage, entertain, and to make them bold for victory. His vision that his guitar was doing something great for the country was not an ordinary vision!

It is said that the guitar is made in the shape of a woman. As the makers are men, it seems that they are fond of the guitar just as they love their girl friends, hugging them fondly, and therefore the Spanish guitar is believed to be made in the shape of a woman. When we look at Buta's song, the makers' thoughts and romanticism can be clearly seen,

I tenderly care for you, lean on, lean on, lean on,

Lean on my soft side, lean on, lean on, lean on,

Sing, be joyous, dance and laugh,

To please all walks of life

Let us sing joyfully! (Pawmlai Tingtang, L. 1-9)

He treats it like a person, talking with it and caressing it.

In P.S.Chawngthu's, *Perhkhbuang tingtang val* the closeness between the guitar and young men can be clearly seen. In his *Parmawi tin banm* he talks about the healing power of nature like flowers, the breeze, the grass, the different types of trees, the hills and the valleys beautifully intertwined including the dangerous looking ravines, and with this a beautiful picture comes into mind, which is the scene of loved ones singing together merrily with a guitar while sitting and relaxing on a pleasant green grass and enjoying the breeze.

After a long stay in London, Wordsworth enjoyed great relief at a country side and thus confessed his state of mind:

*In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. (Tintern Abbey L 110-113)*

In the same spirit, Zirsangzela Hnamte sings:

*Staying all alone in my dwelling place,
My mind starts wandering around;
My longing for the past grows bigger,
But you give me companion,
Giving voice to my loneliness,
And helping me to sing every song,
Never showing any slight annoyance,
You are my priceless melodious guitar.*

(Perkhkuang zai tin thiam, L. 1-8)

From what we have shared, it can be seen that music, the guitar in particular has a deep place in the hearts of the young Mizo people. It is their best friend, and is the source of inspiration and companion in times of their joy and sorrow. The English composers often sat in front of their Piano and write their lyrical songs, but if and when the Mizo composers play guitar poetical words and its melodious music often emerge. Before the introduction of mass media, guitar was the only means of communicating songs especially in rural areas, and its importance is still increasing even today. Therefore, the guitar plays such an important role in writing modern Mizo lyrics that it would be unwise to underestimate its power.

To conclude, the music loving people also loves for peace. Their association with music fostered them to the love for peace and tranquillity. The Mizo traditional tunes are very soft and gentle that they can sing the whole night without getting tired. And this gentle melody changed their thinking and their behaviour to peaceful and tenderly attitude to others. Therefore, music was the tune of their life in the past, and till today, it is the melody of their life which resulted peace and harmony in the state.

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Life Toy

Potluru Subramanyam

Having completed his diurnal journey, the sun appeared to be entering into his celestial abode in the western ghats, as if it take rest there. The two distinct mounts of great height, situated opposite to each other, presented themselves to the spectators to be the two portals of his dwelling. Darkness engulfed the area from all sides.

At that time one middle aged man of thirty five years was seated on the parapet wall of the drain across the gravel road leading to the small adjacent village. He was Nadipaiah who came from Andhra Pradesh state to make lively hood and settled in a small village near Karjat of Maharashtra state for the last fifteen years and leading his life with farm labour. Nadipaiah lost in deep thoughts troubled by his domestic problems of insoluble nature.

It was time for the labourers working in the farm fields of the big farmers to return home, after the day's work was done. Naturally the facial and physical features of Nadipaiah who was expected to return home by that time attracted the attention of his co-workers.

They said, "O! Nadipaiah ! why are you sitting here, even though it is dark?"

Nadipaiah, by way of reply to their query, muttered to himself, "Yes, coming.... coming...."

Of course the cause of his deep thought was quite pathetic. His only son Bakkaiah of three years was suffering from high fever. Sitting by the side of the child Venkamma was weeping. Nadipaiah was not in a position to solve the problem at home and therefore naturally he was too gloomy to go home at that time.

One week back, fever gripped the child Bakkaiah and he was lying in a semi un-coconscious condition... murmuring as if in sleep, in inaudible words, "Dad.... get me the cart. Ma... get me the cart. I want the three wheeled wooden push cart."

It is a labour colony consisting of fifty huts in the nearby village. All the inmates of the colony are labourers, working in the farm fields of the landlord residing in the village, getting small money from their bosses for the work done for them and spending the where-withal for the purchase of the food articles etc.

Early in the morning the labourers used to go to the fields, leaving the children of ten years and below at home. Of course they would also entrust some porridge to the older children to feed the younger ones, during the noon time. The children aged between eight and ten would fondle the children of three years and below, carry them in their arm pits, play with them and also attend to the physical and other needs including feeding of the little children until the sunset when their parents were expected back at home from the their fields. Indeed it was the kingdom of the children during the above interval.

Mrs. Venkamma and Nadipaiah were blessed with only one son who was named Bakkaiah. As they had no other children, they would entrust the custody of their child to the other children in the colony on their departure for the work in the farm fields. After their return to the colony, in the evening, they used to take the child into the hut and caress him therein.

Thus days were rolling on in this routine manner. One night the moon was bearing exuberantly in the sky, radiating her cool rays all over Mother Earth. In this lovely and merry atmosphere, Nadipaiah resting himself on a mat in front of the hut, was observing the light black sports in the moon. Venkamma was cooking food inside the hut. The naked Bakkaiah, their beloved child, sat near his mother, waiting her preparing the food.

But the child, a little meditatively said to his father, "Yes, I shall return your kiss gleefully, only if you get a play thing for me."

Nadipaiah too was mirthful to fulfill the wish of the child. He said merrily, "Don't worry, my child, I shall get whatever toy you want. Hence, kiss me at once."

"No, no kiss. My toy first." said the child.

"Definitely. What is the toy you want, tell me child." said his doting father.

“I want the three wheeled wooden push cart to play and push. It is very nice one. Our play-friend Kamaiah has purchased the cart. It is very nice and comely. I want that one.”

Nadipaiah was taken aback at the desire of his little child and his body began to shudder. He thought his child could choose a chocolate or a sugar-cane piece, the cost of which would be meager. He did not expect that his child would ask for such a costly thing. But having promised, he had to cajole his child into falling in line with his financial position.

Said he, “My child you wanted a costly thing. It is beyond our capacity to buy a wooden push cart. It is very costly. It costs nearly fifty rupees. Ask for the toy, the cost of which is below five rupees. I shall bring it to you immediately.”

“No... no... I want nothing but the wooden push-cart to push and play with.” Said the child and started to weep.

“Sorry my child. Forget the costly toy. Ask for any other gift.” Said his father.

“Only the push cart.” Said the child and kicked the stomach of his father and scrambled back into the hut.

Poor Nadipaiah was in a dilemma now. He reflected on his financial position. Both his wife and himself had been working in the scorching heat of the sun in the farm fields and had been earning a paltry sum of money. Their earning were hardly sufficient for their needs including those of their child. The one and only luxurious possession they could boast of was the hut in which they had been residing. Both his helpmate and himself were having only one pair dress each. The little child was no exception. He has no dress at all, except on piece of cloth to wrap up his nakedness.

While Nadipaiah was deeply immersed in thoughts, his wife came out of the hut with the wailing child in her armpit and thus questioned her husband, “Why do you make the child weep? Is it a joke?”

Replied Nadipaiah, “I have not made the child weep. On the other hand he is making me weep. Ask your son?”

Trying to cajole the child, the mother addressed her son, saying, “My dear child don’t weep. Oh! Look at the comely moon,

my child, she is calling out to you. Both of you can play together merrily my child. Your dad is not a good man. We shall beat him. We shall punish him. We don’t give him food to night.”

But the child continued to wail and blurted out, “Ma. Dad has refused to buy a wooden push cart for me. I want that one Ma !”

She kissed the child, washed his tears and said, “My child! Tomorrow I shall enquire the father of your play-friend and ascertain the price of the wooden push-cart and also from where it was purchased. Don’t worry. I shall bring that for you.”

These words of his mother exhilarated the child Bakkaiah and he burst out at his father, “Dad! you are a very bad dad. Ma is a sweet one. She has promised to purchase a wooden push-cart for me. I can play with it from tomorrow onwards. I don’t give it to you. I don’t even want to speak to you.”

Now began the afflictions of Venkamma, who promised to gift wooden push cart to her son. Next day she came to know that the cost of the cart is fifty rupees. She was highly disappointed. It was impossible for them to purchase a wooden push cart.

When she reached back home she told the child, “The wooden push-cart is not good, my child. I shall bring some other toy for you tomorrow.”

Bakkaiah felt frustrated and began to bemoan, sitting on the floor. He said to his mother, “No... No... I want the same cart by tomorrow. It is very nice. It is beautiful. I want the same one.”

His father consoled the child saying, “My dear child, your Ma will bring the same cart as you want. So don’t cry.”

At the words of his father, Bakkaiah ceased wailing, looking skeptically at his mother. Then he administered an ultimate to the effect that she should bring the wooden push cart to him at any cost. Venkamma grew happy at the appeasement of her son and washed his tears with her hands. She nodded her head in assent, but cursing herself in the heart of hearts about the bane of her poverty.

Then as usual, Venkamma couple left farm work, leaving their son Bakkaiah at home to the care of the aged children in the colony. On the way during the return to the colony in the evening deliberations transpired between the couple about the depth of

their penury and they decided not to purchase the costly wooden push-cart by taking a loan from the landlord. However, they were also eager to pacify their son, by fulfilling their assurance in their own way.

Oh! The hour of return arrived. When the couple reached home they bought a whistle made of palmyrah leaves and cart made of palmyrah pods. Bakkaiah who had been anxiously waiting for the arrival of his parents, expecting the toy 'Push-Cart' turned sudden at sight of the whistle, which are freely available in the fields and refused to accept the gifts. "I want the tri-wheel wooden push-cart to play. I want the same cart."

Throughout the night he had been bemoaning, uttering the above words in semi unconsciousness. By the next morning fever gripped high. Hence, Venkamma could not help remaining at home, to look after her sick child. Alone Nadipaiah went for farm work that day.

Thirty six hours elapsed. The child Bakkaiah had not at all recovered from fever. At the same time, he did not give up the repetition of the words, "I want the cart.... Ma! Dad!"...

The village quack who had been treating the child for the past three days said to the couple, "It is better to take the child to the town."

After prolonged discussions, during the night, Vankamma and her spouse decided to take the child to the hospital in the town. On the advent of dawn Nadipaiah approached his landlord and took a loan of two hundred rupees from him. The same day, Venkamma and her husband took the child to the town and admitted him to the hospital. After two days, the fever waned. But alas! Polio attacked the two legs of the child. Therefore the child was unable to walk.

Venkamma and Nadipaiah burst out into melancholic bemoan met at the sad sight of the polio-affected legs of the child. They were left with fifty rupees, after meeting the expenditure for the medical treatment. Even in this distressed condition, they had not forgotten the desire of their child. During the return journey in the evening, they purchased the three wheeler

wooden push-cart by spending the balance amount with the sole aim of placating their child. Bakkaiah was jolted into peaks of joy, the following words flowed from his mouth spontaneously.

"Thank you Ma! Thank you Dad! It is very nice. I wanted this one only. Now my desire is fulfilled." The child clapped his hands in token of his joy at the new found toy. But alas! The ominous is imminent. Bakkaiah who tried to catch the wood push cart could not move due to lack of strength in his legs and fell down. The parents of the child caught hold his hands and both the sides and lifted him on to the push cart. The child grasped the top of the wood cart. He laid his entire weight on the push cart.

Since the child had an ardent desire for the push cart, he pushed it with great risk and force also. It moved forwards. The child also moved forward, although there was no or little strength in his legs. Thus seven years passed away. Playing with push cart the child of three years grew to be boy of ten years.

The ten year old boy cried allowed gaily. "It is very nice. I am very happy."

Days, months and years passed. Now the age of Bakkaiah was twenty five years. He had to depend upon the push cart even to get small things done, i.e. even to answer nature's call. Bakkaiah had been spending his time through the day in the colony, taking care of the children and feeding them in the absence of their parents, in the same manner as he, as child of three years was under the care of the older boys. The toy push-cart for which he struggled, grew sick and got his two legs affected with polio, had now been his life toy and inseparable companion.

Catching sight of miserable condition of Bakkaiah, his parents used to shed tears incessantly and said to themselves. 'Had his desire been fulfilled at the time of its origin, by hook or crook, he could have been saved of this wretched and pitiable condition.'

They never enjoyed sound and peaceful slumber on any day all through their life.

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Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem **Thanks Giving Dance**

Dr. (Mrs.) Ailynti Nongbri

All the races of the world have their origin in traditional songs, dances and enchanting music which beguile the nature of their culture. Musical instruments rooted in music sounds produce different lutes and melodies which enamour audiences. The joyful festive vibes soothe the tranquil hearts of both the singers and the audiences, and the people gathered are enthralled by the colourful attire and gleaming jewellery of the dancers. On recollecting our thoughts in these hearty reflections, we may willfully say that such a human race that has developed prosperously in their culture and habits may be termed as a 'Dynamic Culture and Society'

In the face of the earth, and especially in the Khasi Hills, God, the divine being had created the streams and the rivulets, the serene hills and mountains and established varied races and people of different types. In them, He has ascribed a virtuous faculty. He holds the mind that ever yielding and humans can be designated to be different as they are special beings. With these wonderful talents, God has also blessed the human race in their strong faiths and beliefs in different religions and practices, their cultural dances and in times of festivity and merriment. These are the manifestations that we should acknowledge God, the Creator who has created us on the face of the earth. Any cultural race or ethnic group can be traced through its roots in its cultural dances which come in many forms. This stands true, as evident in one of Rabindranath Tagore's poem, 'Stray Birds' where aptly describes the role of religion in the society:

*"In death the many becomes one;
in life the one becomes many.
Religion will be one when God is dead".*

The Khasis before the coming of the British Missionaries, when the Khasi alphabet were non-existent, were already preoccupied in their 'Oral Tradition' or in other words 'Oral

Literature'. These were old folklores of the culture and customs of the Khasis passed from one generation to another. It is believed that these old folktales originated in the family (ka lyngwiar dpei), it is in the family where the eldest maternal uncle and other members form thoughts and perceptions on their culture and customs, their different beliefs, religion and matters concerning kinship and matrimony, the members also thank God for His many blessings; hence, the 'Thanks Giving Dance' of the Khasis exist which is held once a year. This dance is also a dance of joy where they give thanks to God the Creator for all His blessings in the year that had passed and to invoke His blessings for the coming year for a bountiful harvest, for the well-being of all and for general prosperity.

The Khasis, since time immemorial, had a wide understanding about life, faith and belief in religion in general. Thus the 'Thanks Giving Dance' is held in God's honour felicitating Him in dance and jolity. Here, the Khasis express their acknowledgement to the Almighty for blessing them with a prosperous life, success, valour, wealth, riches, food for sustenance and other such common needs for man in his day to day life.

The 'Thanks Giving Dance' is held every year in the month of April after the harvesting work is over and the sowing work for the new year is done. It is also a welcome festival to the onset of Spring season when plants at their infancy have started to shoot up and grow, flowers blossom and the whole of nature is invigorated with rejuvenation from early March to the month of April. This folk dance is also an imploring to God beseeching Him to preserve the rich cultural heritage, to strengthen the Khasi faith, to conserve and enforce for the continuity of the Khasi human race and to shower His blessings for their prosperity and development. It is also an imploring to God pleading Him to set free from any harmful circumstances, mishaps, sickness and diseases which contaminate the society.

Thus it is from such dances which came into existence that the Khasis shed light on other people by their sheer purity and simplicity. The great Khasi poet 'Soso Tham' says: Khasis are men

of strong belief and insight. Though he is extremely virtuous he remains adamant and obdurate, but he is a man well aware of the facts of life.

This saying strengthens the facts that the roots and customs of the Khasi people and their rich culture is one that prosper from generation to generation. Thus such dances like the 'Thanks Giving Dance' reveal the purity and honesty of the Khasi people and this also pose as an example to other races for the reasons of the Khasi's originality which has been ever present since times immemorial.



The 'Thanks Giving Dance' literally means the dance of joy, to be free from all the troubles and chores of life. This dance has been laid down by the forefathers of the Khasis, thus in turn has been continued from generation to generation and it is the duty of our present and future generations to restore it in its whole excellence. Through this medium, we can also showcase the world how the rich Khasi tradition transcended from time to time with the dignity inherited through its ancestors. The utter purity and

simplicity of the Khasi people is represented vividly in this dance form which has been founded by our old ancestors. This unique festival grows from time to time and it is counted as one of the landmarks through which we can understand the Khasi culture and manners.

This dancing festival is accompanied with colourful costumes which is meant to be worn strictly only by the dancers. Participation in the dance is also laid down by strict norms especially for the female dancers, such norms though restrictive, are ones which we must abide, for they have been laid down since olden days. They have been put into practice with much thought and insight by our forefathers.



The female dancers : The female dancers should be unmarried and virgins so that they can participate in the dance. The Khasi

traditional female dress is rather elaborate with several pieces of cloth, giving the body a cylindrical shape. On ceremonial occasions, they wear a crown of silver or gold on the head. A spike or peak is fixed to the back of the crown, corresponding to the feathers worn by the men folk. The Khasi female dancers, traditionally dresses a two-piece cloth pinned on each shoulder called 'Ka Jainpien Shad' and a velvet blouse 'Ka Sopti Kti'. Women wear gold and silver jewellery usually of very pure form and aesthetically crafted by local smiths. Women wear different types of earrings called 'Siar Kynthei' made of gold. Another remarkable piece of jewellery of the Khasis is the 'rupa-tylli' or silver collar-a broad, flat silver band which hangs down the neck in front and is secured from behind called 'Pansngiat'. They also wear the 'Taj Rupa'-a silver armband, 'Kynjri Tabah Kynthei'-silver necklace and 'U Shanryndang'-necklace made of gold.

Hence, we can say that the traditional Khasi dress enhances the self esteem of a woman's fascia. Women are held in high regard in Khasi society as they are the keepers of the house and the propagators of the race. They are rooted in custom and tradition, it is also said that the woman's conscience and her sense of responsibility is as heavy the task as dancing with her hefty jewellery and ornaments. On dancing the female would not lift her eyes for fear of being branded a coquette, a reputation that a sensible girl would not like to be associated with. The Khasi female dancers dance in the inner circle of the dancing arena, moving their forefeet gracefully forward and backward in conformity with the sound of the beating of the seven drums and the playing of the flutes.

The male dancers: The traditional Khasi male dress dancers is 'Jymphong Shad' or a longish sleeveless coat without collar, fastened by thongs in front. On ceremonial occasions, they appear in 'Jymphong' and dhoti with an ornamental waist-band. Khasi man can be identified with their unstitched lower garment 'Jainboh' a red dhoti made of silk, jacket and turban that he wore. Khasi men wear earrings 'Siar Shynrang', as large as gold pendants, oval or circular in shape, 'Shanryndang', gold necklace, 'Kynjri Tabah

Shynrang'-a bunch of silver chains. A long ivory sword of the Khasi called 'Ka Waitlam', the dancers also wear a turban-'Ka Jainspong' which is of red and yellow colour made of pure silk. The turban's cloth is filled with intricate geometrical figures of tigers, elephants, etc., specially hand knitted. The 'Spong Khor' on the other hand is another type of 'Jainspong' which is more expensive and hence many people who cannot afford it commonly prefer other fabrics. Behind the turban are 'U Thuia Shad' which is a band of birds' feathers which the male dancers put over their head fitted in the turban while dancing.

Thus the 'Thanks Giving Dance' forms the cultural heritage of the Khasis. It is a folk dance filled with purity, peace, love and friendship. It is most evident, vivid and clear that other's perception of the 'Khasi Culture' is conceived through the 'Thanks Giving Dance', the Khasi people's true roots are still abided well and this continues to be a customary ideal.

Thus we Khasis should be proud of our cultural heritage represented in this festival for the hearty blessings of the divine are consecrated and sanctified throughout. We should, hence, continue in our stride to uplift these feelings and make such festivals be a landmark of our culture throughout generations by preserving it continually.

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Bangladeshi Short Story : Contemporary Trends

Rafique Ullah Khan

Short story is the youngest literary form in the history of world literature. Like all other literary forms evolved in the nineteenth century, the literary genre called short story made its debut in a gradual manner in the backdrop of social, political, economic and culture realities as well as the strife-stricken experiences of colonial life. Bengali short story, since its very inception, stood on a solid foundation coming into magical contact of a multidimensional genius no less than Rabindranath Tagore. In fact, Rabindranath wrote a number of extraordinary short stories in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Rabindranath came to the then East Bengal, now Bangladesh, in 1891 entrusted with the responsibilities of looking after the landed property and estate of his family, which gave him ample opportunities to interact with the new culture, nature, environment and soil of Bangladesh. It helped him greatly to widen the realm of his experiences. The multilayered truth of the metamorphosis of Bengali culture in the last decade of the nineteenth century spreading up to the first decade of the twentieth was reflected in the short stories of Tagore.

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There are a series of epoch-making incidents, which were most instrumental in shaping the social milieu of Bangladesh during the post-liberation period. The emergence of an independent and sovereign State called Bangladesh is the most outstanding event during this period. It was an inevitable culmination of historical development that Bangladesh emerged as a new state within 24 years after the birth of Pakistan.

Though the changes were visible in the upper structure, these did not have equal impact on the basic infrastructure of a society.

That is why along with the heroic achievements and glorious chapters of Liberation War, the pains and frustration of missing the dreams and expectations of our independence have also been depicted in the fictions written in the decade of 1970s.

The uniqueness in the fiction based on the Liberation War of Bangladesh is to visualize the life in the blood-soaked land, to discover it in serious pains and sacrifice at the cause of the interest of the country, and finally, to look for the least streak of hope in the life around. The number of short stories written on the Liberation of Bangladesh is also notable. The writers have shaped a recurrent spirit of national consciousness combining numerous fragmented pieces of artistic accomplishment.

During the Liberation War of Bangladesh a volume of short stories entitled *Bangladesh Katha Koy* (Bangladesh Speaks) edited by Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury was published from Kolkata. Consequently, the stories had the overt reflections of the instantaneous reaction towards the occurrences, developments and spirit of the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

The number of collective words to short stories based on Liberation of Bangladesh is notable. Both the veteran writers as well as the young ones have written huge short stories on this theme. And, even the styles and techniques of the stories are unique in many cases. The number of volumes of short stories based on Liberation War is not minimal, too. Some mentions in this regard are as follows:

Basher Al Helal's *Prothom Krishnachura* (The first Krishnachura, 1972), Hasan Azizul Huq's *Naambin*, Gotrahin (No Name No Class, 1975), Shaukat Osman's *Jonmo Jodi Toba Bange* (If You are Born in Bengal, 1975), Abu Zafar Shamsuddin's *Rajon Thakurer Terthajatra* (Rajon Thakur's Pilgrimage, 1977) Abu Bakar Siddiq's *Morei Banchar Swadhinata* (Freedom to Live after Dying, 1977), Sadeqa Shafiullah's *Abasheshe Juddha* (The War At Last, 1980). Khaleda Salahuddin's *Jokbon Ruddhashmas* (In Difficult Times, 1986), Ehasn Chowdhury's *Ekatturr Golpa* (Stories of 1971, 1986), Syed Iqbal's *Ekdin Bangabandhu Onyanya Golpo* (One Day Bangabandhu and Other Stories, 1986, Syed Shamsml Haq's *Jaleshwarir Galpogulo*

(The Jaleshwari's Stories, 1990). Bipradas Barua's *Juddha Jayer Golpo* (The Stories of Victory in the War, 1985), *Sada Kafin* (White Coffin, 1984) and *Muktijuddhara* (The Freedom Fighters, 1991), Kazi Zakir Hasan's *Juddher Golpa* (The Stories of War 1991), and Selina Hossain's *Porojonomo* (The Life After Death). These volumes offer the diverse presentation of life during the Liberation War.

Besides, Syed Shamsul Haq's *Prachin Bongher Nibshwa Sontan* (Destitute Children of the Ancient Tribe, 1981), Borhanuddin Khan Zahangir's *Mundobin Moharaj* (The Headless King the Great, 1974), Shaukat Ali's *Lelihan Sadb* (Crazy Desires, 1977), Pabeya Khatun's *Muktijoddhar Stri* (The Wife of a Freedom Fighter, 1986), Rashid Haider's *Tokhon* (Then, 1987), Harun Hanbib's *Bidrahi O Apon Podaboli* (The Rebel and Own Verses, 1985) have included stories on various contexts of Liberation War. *Muktijuddher Golpo* (The Stories of Liberation War, 1983) edited by Abul Hasnat, *Muktijuddher Nirbachito Golpa* (Selected Stories of Liberation War, 1985) and *Muktijuddher Goplo* (The Stories of Freedom Fighters, 1991) edited by Harun Habib have presented stories directly written on the war of independence by our veteran and young writers. The influence of Liberation War can be traced in the use of theme, style, technique, language pattern as well as literary elements of multiple kinds. In fact, Liberation War has left unmistakable influences on our fictional writings in a heterogeneous way. Sometimes the stories have directly presented the tales of Liberation War and sometimes they have just embodied the spirit of heroic deeds of the same.

Some stories have exposed the respect and love towards the pro-Liberation sides and hatred towards the people who worked against the Liberation of Bangladesh. Some short stories have just indirect touches of the same.

Almost all the fiction writers of Bangladesh have written short stories on various perspectives of Liberation War of Bangladesh.

Shaukat Osman (1917-1998) has proved his ability in presenting the socio-political realities during the Post Liberation Bangladesh. As an artist of fiction he has developed his technique

gradually. He has observed closely the developments and changes in his society and state collecting suitable ideas and subjects for his stories. This is a unique style that Shaukat Osman has mastered. He has also observed the trends of times in the Post Liberation Bangladesh in his collections of stories like *Jonmo Jodi Tobo Bange* (If the You are a Born Bengal, 1975), *Ebong Teen Mirza* (And Three Mirzas, 1986) and *Ishwarer Protidwanddhi* (God's Challenger, 1990).

Sarder Jayenuddin (1918-1986) has mainly presented the tales of village life in his stories. We can easily discover a wide variety of human instincts such as emotions, impulse, feelings, pains and pleasures in his fiction. But, sometimes the contexts of history undergo certain transformation. We come across such instances in his collections of stories like *Oshtoprohor* (All the Times, 1971) and *Bela Banerjee's Prem* (Bela Banarjee's Love, 1973) published after the liberation of Bangladesh.

Alauddin Al Azad (1932), in his short stories, has presented the time, the society and the diversities in life. In the decade of 1950s, Azad concentrated on Marxism in writing fiction; however, he became more biased towards writing short stories highlighting erotic aspects of men and women. However, he was working on changing the subjects of his stories. In the post Liberation Bangladesh, he tried to uphold the spirit of Liberation War along with the lethargic trend in society its glittering, elitism and heartlessness as reflected in men and women of that time. The consciousness towards contemporary times and issues was strongly exposed in Azad's collections of stories *Amar Rokto, Swapna Amar* (My Blood, Dream of Mine, 1975) published in 1970s and *Jibon Jemon* (Life As We See, 1988) published in 1980s.

Alauddin Al Azad, who is conscious of the society and the age he belongs to, has succeeded in revealing the paradox of human relationship. His short stories depict, on one hand, the heroic spirit of Liberation War of Bangladesh, and on the other, a discriminatory imbalanced society in the Post Liberation period. These paradoxical stories are unique in the history of Bengali fiction.

Syed Shamsul Huq (1935) has displayed his talent in depicting the contemporary life quite forcefully in his stories based on

Liberation War. He has presented the ups and downs of urban middle class from a romantic point of view. Syed Huq in always in search of diversities while choosing his themes, designing his plot and applying his techniques. It is quite natural that a writer is often influenced by his contemporary time and events. A creative talent in also keen in watching the evolution of his society as well as the times and the state he lives in. The struggle for freedom in 1971 has not only ensured the independence of Bangladesh but also created an opportunity for people's economic prospects. In spite of people's great sacrifice, the qualitative change in the socio-economic sector has not taken place. Large scale indiscipline and discrimination prevailing in the society have broken the dreams of the country as a whole. In these contexts of dreamlessness and hopelessness, Syed Huq worked on his post Liberation short stories.

In his collections of stories like *Prachin Bongsber Nihswa Sontan* (1982) and *Joleshwarir Golpogulo* (1990) he has focused on life, human existence, men's establishment in the state and society in contemporary times, struggle for survival, blind superstition, dreams of the individuals as well as political development of the country. Issues of an individual have dominated the subjects in *Prachin Bongsber Nihswa Sontan*. On the other hand, social, political and state affairs have mainly been highlighted in the book *Joleshwarir Golpogulo*.

Syed Huq collected his characters, plot and contexts from village life for his stories compiled in the book *Prachin Bongsber Nihswa Sontan*. Though the life in a village dominated the theme in this book, yet the writer was highly objective in presenting the social realities without being prejudiced towards emotional treatment to his stories. The stories in this book, published in 1980s, are not based on a dream-laden Bengal grown out of memories and joyous tales told by others. It is because of the misrule of the land lords, droughts and disasters that the villages became shapeless.

Though Syed Huq's stories have featured the issues of contemporary society, they have also depicted historical facts in the past. The have-nots, peasants, laborers and working people

have registered their protest against the British colonial exploitation and subjugation. They have always displayed their valor and spirit for the cause of their motherland.

The stories in Syed Huq's *Joleshwarir Golpogulo* were based on contemporary issues. In the post Liberation Bangladesh there was a possibility of socio-economic advancement, but this chance lost its validity because of the continuous failures in the then state policy.

Like contemporary society, life and history, the Liberation War of Bangladesh also became a focal point in the fictional writing of Syed Shamsul Huq. Liberation War is not merely a sensitive description of a war but also an embodiment of ultimate result of drams cherished by an oppressed nation.

Borhanuddin Khan Zahangir's (1936) collection of short stories *Mundabin Maharaj* published in the decade of 1970s has featured the socio-political realities of pre-and post –Liberation Bangladesh. Through the blood –smeared struggle in the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the people of this country have also foreseen a possibility of attaining economic sovereignty along with political liberty. But these cheerful expectations have faced negative realities after the independence of Bangladesh. Tattered economy, unemployment, uncertain future of freedom fighters returning from war, anarchy, killings and frustrations, youth involvement in destructive activities have dragged the country to a situation of periphery. The tale of a professional killer who took part in the Liberation War and his involvement in more killings after the independence in the story entitled *Mundabin Maharaj* is a reflection of a sterile state structure.

Al Mahmud's exposition of sexual realities in his stories seems to reflect Sigmund Freud's scientific presentation of unknown mystery of psycho-realities based on sexual pre-occupation. Unconscious erotic expression, its forms in light and darkness, its mystery and destructive stamina that usually happen in men and women, sometimes force them towards abnormal psycho realities Al Mahmud has depicted all these phenomena in the psycho-physical aspirations of life in his stories .

Shaukat Ali (1936) in his collection of short stories called *Leliban Sadb* (1977) published in the decade of 1970s has created both the inner world and the external world of his stories with profound insight into the life he viewed and the uniqueness of style and themes. The stories in the book *Leliban Sadb* have mainly depicted the rural areas of Bengal. Not only the surrender of the repressed, fearful and helpless village people, but also their unity, movement and protest against the privileged and leading economic class have constituted the subject-matter of this book. This is a positive development in this literary work. The writer has also presented the crisis in the ethnic minority community taking into consideration the contexts of a greater society. And this is how he succeeded in exposing the social realities of the country as a whole.

Deeply committed to the cause of historical development of Bangladesh, the writer has investigated into the realities of Liberation War from various perspectives. He has given a captivating description of the tragic realities of the war and its aftermath in Bangladesh.

Published in 1980s, Shaukat Ali's collection of short stories *Shono Hey Lakhindar* (Listen to Us Lakhindar), the writer mainly exposed his class consciousness while presenting realities in an agrarian society. He has focused on the anger, pains and protests of the poor, simple and unaware rural people against the misdeeds of the society's leading people called *Mobajon*. His stories offer the images of people's collective or individual protest against the unbearable repressions of the land lord's and the money lenders. The writer has used the myths of Chand Sadagor and Behula Lakhindar in depicting the deprived life of Santal community in his stories.

Hasan Azizul Huq (1939) has presented various realities of life in his stories during the three decades ranging from 1970s to 1990s. The hardship in life in the Rada region, various forms and metamorphosis in their life. Famine and struggle against these phenomena have aptly been articulated in his collection of short stories *Jibon Ghose Agun* (Fire from Life, 1973). On the other hand, the blood-smeared struggles in the Liberation War of Bangladesh,

the limitless sacrifice of people for independence, their expectation and aspirations in this regard as well as pains for distortion of dreams have been highlighted in this book *Nambin Gotrabhin* (No Name No Class, 1975). The history of the struggle against difficulties, famine, natural rudeness, repressions of land lords and money lenders inflicted on the poor people constitute the subject matter of this book.

Hasan Azizul Huq's unique approach to known and unknown aspects of society and states their metamorphosis, his close and direct interactions in this regard, have shaped an ultimate essence in his stories.

In the book *Nambin Gotrabhin*, the writer has presented the tales of common people who participated in the Liberation War of Bangladesh, their dreams, aspirations, expectations and the limitless frustration due to the dreams being broken after independence. The nation called Bengali has to pay a lot for the freedom of their motherland. The tales and damages of different episodes in the war, direct battles and loss of life have found expressions in the stories. Similarly, the frustration among the freedom fighters and the people has also been expressed in the stories of this book.

The unique feature of Hasan Azizul Huq's stories is the apt unveiling of the rude realities with objective approach. He has presented the tales of urban people depicting their mindset as he did so in exposing the life in the Rada region. He is committed to depicting the existence of humanity in life, his characters comprising both men-women are able to overcome repression and misrule in his stories. This life-conquering spirit along with intrepid entity of the individuals concerned has given a new dimension to Hasan Azizul Huq's stories.

Aktaruzzaman Elias (1943-1997) has portrayed the emotion-detached and dispassionate life of human being. His observation is unique and he has tried to perceive the inner conflicts and vision of human existence. A very close observer, Elias has shaped his stories based on his personal experiences. *Anya Ghore Anya Swar* (The Other Voice in the other house, published in 1970s), *Khoari*

(1982) *Dudhebbate Utpat* (1983), *Dhoxokher Om* (1989) etc have dealt with contemporary structure of human life. Emotional state of urban life, unhygienic and polluted life of old Dhaka, aggression against the minorities in pre-independent era, corruption, political instability, dominion of criminals traitors, miscreants and state's conspirators – all these are major topics of his writing.

Selina Hossain (1947) is one of the major story writers of Bangladesh in the decade of 1970s. She has been contributing remarkably for the last thirty years stretched over a period from 1970s to 1990s. She has used a wide variety of subjects as her themes. The mental catastrophe of men and women is partially reflected in the short stories of earlier phase of her creative life. On the other hand, the unchanging lifestyle of backward rural life supplied the major ingredients for her story. *Jalabati Megher Batas* (Wind from the Water-laden Clouds, 1975) and *Matijaner Sukhdukha* (Matijan's Joys and Sorrows, 1995) are two of her collection of short stories where she has worked with commendable artistic dexterity on joys and sorrows of urban middle class and lower class, delight and sufferings of common people, individual and familial crisis as well as struggle for existence of the rootless populace floating here and there.

The stories of Abu Bakar Siddiq are completely different since he is gifted with a disillusioned insight of looking into the depth of life. The dialectic approach of human existence has found expression in his stories from an objective perspective. The suffering of people either detached or will placed in the center of there existence, their tug of war and quest for self identity have constituted the contents of his stories. His books like *Bhumiheen Desh* (Landless Country, 1985), *Morei Bacher Sadhinota* (Liberty to live after dying, 1987), *Chorbimash kal* (The time of Destruction of Shoal, 1987), *Chhayaprodhan Ogbran* (Shadowy Autumn, 1987) are collections of stories dealing with a changed definition of life, A destructive life-cycle of men and women torn in continual clashes come to focal point of his stories.

Abus Shakoor (1941) has portrayed the middle class urban society in his short stories. It is true that his short stories represent

various aspects of our daily life including its balance and imbalance, stability and unsteadiness, intention of mind and reaction of people of intellectual height, their up and doing for survival and an intellectual articulation of the themes of clashes and co-ordination among them. His collection of stories like *Khioman* (decaying, 1961), *Crisis* (1975), *Dhos* (Landslide, 1984), *Bicholito Prarthana* (1985) etc have also focused on various stages of men-women confliction, internal inconsistency and landless hapless people in rural life.

The agony and struggle of the people uprooted from the homes of their ancestors have also been reflected in the story called *Dhos*.

Rashid Haider (1941) is a conscious artist changing his themes and forms all the times. He has entered into different realities for portraying the life he has viewed, His subject has traveled a wide range from the middle class life to the epical events and magnanimity of liberation war, His main focus has been the achievements of the Bengali race in the nine-month long blood smeared liberation war of Bangladesh. The heinous cruelty of the Pakistani soldiers and their associates, the heroic resistance by the intrepid Bengalis and the varied experiences of people's war at all levels have become an oft-recurrent phenomenon in his stories.

Antare Bhinna Purush (Another Man in the Heart, 1973) has depicted the inward complexity of middle class life in urban society. The men and women presented in the stories of this book have to be identified by their mindset, their action and reaction and their intrinsic feelings. The multidimensional complexity of individual characters, inner ures, mysterious erotic lusts, jealousy, deception etc have been interwoven in a admixture of diverse impulses in the stories of the book *Antare Bhinna Purush*.,,

In his story books like *Uttarkal* (1987), *Tokhon* (1987), *Purbapar* (1993) the liberation war along with its huge activities have been used as central central theme. The nine-month long struggle of resistance by the Bengali freedom fighters, numerous loss of lives, brutal atrocities by the Pakistani occupation forces, the unscrupulous selfishness of the anti-liberation collaborators of Pak army, betrayal by some sections of fighters and such other incidents of many kind and magnitude have been described in these stories.

Barek Abdullah (1947-1994) is a storyteller of 1970s. His first book is Barek Abdullah's Golpo (Barek Abdullah's Stories) Published in 1990s. Political, Social and economic situations instability and the significant events are his themes. Political and economic instability, fracture, unstructured society, famine, food shortage, hapless people and many other, hidden chapters have appeared in his writings. The devastating time of post-liberation Bangladesh is the background of his stories. He has focused on the famine of 1974 by portraying the vicious time and the hungry people in his humble language.

Harun Habib is an amazing architect of saga of liberation war resembling an epic. He is a maker of many thought-provoking and exciting stories on this theme. He is a freedom fighter. He has truly depicted from his won experiences the war of freedom, heroism of warriors, their dedication, devotion and glorious achievements in this regard. His main concern is the independence of the country including the valor, courage and self sacrifice by the freedom fighters, treachery by the collaborators, and various glorious chapters of our convincing victory, He has articulated in his stories the wartime anxiety, fear, death and endangered existence of people of this soil.

Lal Shirt O Pitripurush (1985), *Bidroho O Upon Padaboli* (1985), *Golposaptok* (1997), *Sarnopakho Eagle* – these four short stories were written on the big canvas of Liberation War that harun habib saw in his won eyes as an active participant of freedom struggle. The author is searching out diversity in a bid to discover the source of his story *Andha Lathial* (blind stick-fighter, 1999). He has also looked for a different life-cycle coming out from the all-pervasive contexts of liberation war.

Lal Shirt O Pitripurush (1985) and *Bidroho O Upon Padboli* (1985) Were published in 1980s and *Golpsaptok* (1997) in 1990s. The major theme of these books is unmistakably the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

Kayes Ahmed (1948-1992) was a powerful author of post-partition Bangladesh. He was a bright and towering figure who experimented on both subject and form of Bengali short stories

of 1960s. Kayes Ahmed's *Andho Tirondaz* (1978) and *Lashkata Ghor* (1987) have profoundly dealt with dark, distressed, Shelterless and isolated life of human being. He has also focused on rootless and ill fated people. *Andho Tirondaz* has taken into account a person's silence, loneliness, sense of defeat, endangered dreams yearning, painful existence confined in an unbearable environment, aching memory and miserable time, In his *Lashkata Ghor* the writer has passed from individual entity to a wider world of society and history.

Humayun Ahmed's (1948) *Shreshtho Golpo* (Best Stories, 1988) focus on joy, sorrow, delight, dream and failure in our life, Urban middle class life, their demand, want, deprivation, deficiency, success and failure appear in his stories quite lively and intimately. Starting from the sweet and sour experiences of personal life he describes in a simple language various episodes of liberation war and its aftermath. Diminutive experiences in life and various difficulties during the days of freedom fighting have closely appeared in his stories. Insignificant want, desire, yearning, joy, sorrow, distress and frustration are frequent features in his fiction.

Tapos Mojumdar's (1952) *Mangal Songhita* (Welfare Book) and *Keo Kake Chene Na* (nobody Knows Any Body) were published in 1990s where the writer added a distinctive dimension in respect of environment, telling the story and experimentation in devising a unique language. The stories of *Mangal Songhita* are significant, in particular, for a newer quest for events, quality of expression, experiment and analytical approach towards life.

Mustafa Panna's (1952) *Lokasokol* (People, 1984) and *Krisnopokkeher Protipod* (1989) were published in 1980s, where he focused on daily life of the deprived and underprivileged people. Grassroots people surrounded by natural disasters, river erosion, dearth, scarcity and various oppressions are the main features of his writings. The collective human entity that wins or gets defeated in the everyday battle of life is the main source of his works.

Syed Iqbal's (1953) *Ekin Bangabandhu O Onayano Golpo* (One day Bangdandhu and Other stories, 1986) has depicted blood smeared freedom fighting, political assassination of 1975 and

critical time of post-independence days. Besides, the writer has dwelt on the territorial identity and mental affliction of the individuals passing through a hostile time after the independence of Bangladesh.

Sushanta Majumdar's (1954) stories have articulated the themes of war, frustration of post-liberation time, social decadence and discrimination, erroneous social structure, minority problem and their identity crisis. More to it, his writings present an overview of the suffering, anguish and pain of common people deprived of their dreams and reality, In *Chera Khora Jomi* (A Piece of Rugged Land, 1988) Sushanta Majumdar has investigated into the banned politics of South Bengal as well as the gluttonous deeds of soldiers just after its liberation. Sushanta Majumdar's *Chera Khora Jomi* (1988) and *Shorire Shit O Tebile Gundapanda* (Winter in Physique and Miscreants on Table) have directly focused on the nature and reality of life at rural and urban setting.

Grassroots people, struggling community of North Bengal and their existences hopes and aspirations have made their artistic appearance in the stories of Manju Sarkar. Manju is remarkably different in telling his short story and his expressive style is very much dissimilar with other storytellers in 1960s and 1970s. Poverty stricken people and their sufferings, pains, anguishes and desires have deliberately made their way into his works.

Poverty stricken people in our rural society and their way of life are the major themes of *Obinashi Ayozan* (Indestructible Start, 1982), *Mrityuban* (Death Arrow, 1986) and *Ucched Ucched Khela* (A Game of Eviction, 1990) in 1980s.

Haripad Datta's *Surjer Grahane Fera* (returning to Sun's Eclipse, 1985), *Jowal Bhangar Pala* (Breaking the Yoke, 1985) and *Ekti Puraton Urdi* (An Old Uniform, 1988) have prominently focused on the true picture of rural life in Bangladesh. Although the social crisis and intrigues have vividly grasped Haripad Datta's *Jowal Bhangar Pala*, the emotion and illusion of liberation war also featured in his writings.

In 1980s, Ahmed Bashir's (1955) *Anya Potobhumi* (Another Backdrop, 1981), and *Papgrobo* (The Sin Planet, 1989) have unveiled

the inner realities of social structure during post-liberation war times. After liberation war, we got a new look in our society, Endless hopes, aspirations, commitments and scarcities have boomed in people's mind. These are the main aspects in his storylines. There is hardly any direct expression of liberation war in the stories of Ahmed Bashir. He emphasized upon various episodes in his stories which grew out of indirect linkage with liberation war.

3

It is noticeable that a modern experimental form was being exercised in the short stories of Bangladesh in 1980s and 1990s. At the same time a counter trend was active in the making of popular short stories. It is known as popular 'Technique' or 'Method' or 'Stream'. Imdadul Huq Milon (1950) is widely known as a conventional Short story writer in Bangladesh. Though he is mainly an interpreter of urban life, the life in the remote rural areas became contents of his writings. The world of his story is profoundly rich in selecting themes from both rural and urban settings. It is true that his novels represent our daily way of life. His novel also tells the pain, happiness, adoration, abortion and dreams of middle class people. Besides, some of his stories have focused on the marginalized society in the countryside.

Nakib Feroz's *Behular Bhela* (1991) has largely depicted the rural life with all its despair, desolation and hopelessness taken together.

Moinul Ahsan Saber (1958) is mainly a story teller of urban middle class, He avoids mandatory and set concepts but has experimented with the new mode of middle class depression and despairs. It seems that the writer Saber feels much more comfortable in analyzing and dissection the middle class mind. This class represents the majority in our society. Their social status, thoughts, likes and dislikes are completely different from other classes. They oscillate between hope and disappointment. He has added a new classic dimension to his stories growing out of the monotonous middle class life in urban society.

Published in 1980s, Moinul Ahsan Saber's *Porasto Sobis* (1982) and Aagonon Sangbad (1984) have vividly depicted the urban social life in our country.

The story 'Bakkoal Sangbad' in the book *Aagomon Sangbad* has portrayed the daily life of rural people and their unknown dilemmas.

After the end of 1990s, Shahduzzman's *Koyekti Biboboal Golpo* (Some Bewildered Stories, 1996) and *Poshchimer Megbe Sonar Singho* (Golden Lion in Western Clouds, 1999) were published. He has adopted a technique of experimental thought processing and artistic quest in these stories. He passed on from a social dilemma to the Liberation War of 1971 apart from dwelling on diverse aspects of life such as des pair, conflict, emotion, illusion, feelings and similar factors in his *Koyekti Biboboal Golpo*. In his *Poshchimer Megbe Sonar Singha* the writer has stressed upon an individual's dreams, struggles, psychological analysis, existence, romance, ideology and way of life in his own way. His personal observation and insight into humankind have enriched his writings marked with fall of worldwide political ideology, disparity-based society and inflexible consciousness of life.

Mohibul Aziz (1961) is recognized as a careful, prolific and experimental writer in the world of short story in Bangladesh. He has published *Gram Unnayan Complex* and *Nobituner Bagho Chad* (1988) where the writer has focused on common themes in his distinctive styles. These collections are unique for the story structure, language, style, wit, humor, and above all, aesthetic accomplishment.

Syed Reazur Rashid appears as outstanding in creating a distinctive form of Bengali short stories in his book *Aguner Bipod- Apod* (Dangers of Fire, 1994) and *Sada Kabini* (Plain Stories, 1996). Portrayal of story, characterization, plot construction, observation and use of tentative language are the main characteristics of his works. Reazur Rashid has searched a new way for telling his stories.

Expressions of modern artistic experimentations are easily discernible in Shidul Alam's (1963) *Ghumpkar Shinghason* (Throne of Worms, 1990). It is recognized as a modern experimental work.

His story closely relates to absurd form of literature focusing of men and women relationship as well as confrontation and tug of war of material world.

Nasreen Jahan (1964) is an artist delineating the inner realities of human life. She goes deep into the subtle layer of psychological existence of human consciousness. Intricate existentialist thoughts, Freudian psychology, perversion, individual experiences centering round our existence, fear, anguish and repentance have been artistically expressed in her stories. She has also applied feminist approaches in unfolding the inner realities of contemporary life. Her excellence lies in the fact that she is never timid in portraying time, however past or near it is.

Nasreen Jahan's stories offer word-pictures of subtle inner consciousness of individual mind. In her works we also identify that she is ware of her age and society. Time and social structure come out in her works in a large and continuous frame. Most of her works have been recognized as psychological fictions. Her stories have delineated queries of individual existence, complexities of mental perversion, subdued sexual desires in super-realistic images. For long the women community has struggled for realizing their rights. Her books like *Bichurno Chaya* (Crushed Shadow, 1988), *Poth, Hey Poth* (Path, O Path, 1989), *Surjo Tamoshi* (Sun Darkness, 1989), *Sararat Biraler Shobdho* (All the Night Sounds of a Cat, 1991), *Purush Rajkumari* (Male Princess, 1996), *Kathpencha* (Owl, 1999) are extremely unique works where conflicts, jealousy, panic and affliction have come out as lively and intimate themes. Nasreen is prone to undergo kind of self transformation. She is mainly depth-searching and experimental in dealing with her stories.

Parvez Hassain's (1964) short stories are peopled with characters and events very familiar to us. His is a world of mixed queries of modern men with their intricate mindsets. The short stories of Parvez Hossain have the wonderful ability to bring the readers to a world where feelings are genuine and ideas inspiring via a narrative style that is as gripping as it is lively. His Main themes are the hidden psychology of modern urban man, the isolated inner world of modern and the interactive clashes of

their opposing feelings. His writings reveal that he feels much more at ease in analyzing and narrating the middle income group. This group is the majority in our country and they are the ones who are the most representative of our culture, heritage and values.

Sad Kamali has portrayed the distress and dangers of modern time, men and society's psychological turbulence, alienation, wrecked and ruined social structures in his stories. His books *Abosbeshe Nishobdo Ontime* (At last in silence, 1992), *Abhibyaktibadi Golpo* (Impressionist Stories, 1996) and *Upokothar Apel* (Apples of Legend, 1996) have mainly dealt with runs and fractures of time in a restless and turbulent society.

Selim Morshed is a short storyteller of 1980s and his book *Kata Saper Mandu* (Head of a Butchered Serpent, 1993) has with the rough and tough time in our society. Difficult time, hapless people and their suffering, disputation of commoners, sexual life, corruption, terrorism and corrupt politics have been discussed in his story. It is true that his stories represent our daily way of life, His stories also tell of our pain, happiness, abortion and portrait of time as a killer in a politics-dominated society.

Kajol Sahnawau's *Kachimgala* (Melted Tortoise, 1993) has presented the characters in such a way that they offer multiple identities before us. The internal sense of pain of men and women in a negative social context, their psychological intricacy, the ideological deviation of an individual and the spoilt dreams of middle class have found artistic expression in his story collection *Kachimgala*.

4

The Bengali short stories in 1990s have undergone gradual changes absorbing the upcoming international trends and forces. The short stories of this period have also established a linkage with global advancement tearing off its conventional form in view of unthinkable development of technology and free flow of information. So they bear the traits of making and remaking of their own forms keeping pace with world perspectives.

Mamun Hussain is exceptional for telling the story in a different and experimental manner. It seems that he is not telling the story, he utters the story in a *Shanto Santrashar*

Chadmari (Target of Cool Violence, 1995), *Manusher Mrityu Hole* (If Man Dies, 2000) and *Balok Belar Koushol* (Techniques of Boyhood, 2002) he has experimented with various dissimilar. He is unique in rendering the image of story, storyline and above all characterization. He often brings out diverse events, pictures and imageries instead of simple narration.

The significant aspects of Wasi Ahmed's stories lie in the author's quest into an individual and the time-frame he grows with. His stories are gifted with newer consciousness of life despite the fact that most of his themes are conventional. Hypocrisy underlying urban politics and our Liberation war have dynamically been focused in his story. As one goes through his works one feels like liking directly at the scenes from the liberation war. He has tried to grasp the spirit of our liberation war and his strong writing has helped us to carry on with our individuality and uniqueness. This fact has been reflected in his two books published in 1990s *Chhayadondi O Onyanya* (Shadow-stick and other Stories, 1992) and *Bijmontra* (Seed Charm, 1998).

Makhranj Khan is one of the noted fiction writers in 1980s when Bengali short story attained a unique form, technique and trend. Makharaj Khan's two collections of short stories published in the 1990 *Biggapon O Manusher Golpo* (Stories of Advertisements and Men, 1989) and *Tamrakut Admi* (Tamrakut Man, 1999) have featured universal themes as well as contemporary queries of life presented in a unique technique and style. The writer has avoided traditional style of writing. He has been an experimentalist here. *Beggapon O Masusher Golpo* has featured the tales of poverty, greed, separation, erotic phenomena, sexual aspirations, crisis in life, exploitation in men and women's daily life, On the other hand, the writer has focused on history and contemporary issues in the stories included in the book *Tamrakut Admi*.

Mashiul Alam is unique with his extraordinary characteristics among the socially conscious fiction writers in 1990s. His subtle

and sensitive insight in looking into life has given his stories a new dimension. Masihul Alam is eager to experiment in respect of technique and style. His collection of short stories *Rupali rui O Onyanya Golpo* (Silver Rui fish and Other Stories) has exposed multiple crises, complexities in entitles, internal strife and modern psycho-perversion in an individual. At the same time the story 'Rupali Rui' through the use of symbols, featured the tales of poor helpless people, their pains, their sufferings, the spoil of their dreams and expectations as well as deprivation of translation their hopes and expectations into reality.

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Jayanta Kar Sharma/ Life: A Quest

Quest for life continues...
sixty years of independence elapsed
amidst healthy and greasy files
in the midst of mentally
and physically ill ones.

Life lost in mirage....
Gandhi's 'Hai-Ram'
leads to betrayal of faith and belief,
momentary loss of independence
dictatorship enters into humanity.

Government changes
leaders change
new files give rise to old ones
but fertility of land remains,
remains the purity of water and air
and the humanitarian looks
never changes
like the ever barren land.

A waste land indeed
a poisonous one,
a yawning lion
roars in silence
betrays ever
with new body and look.

Quest is on....
for lost life's treasure
from village deity's temple
to the sanctum sanctorum of Lord,
from the village school to university,
from a village
middleman's treasury to
the share scam,

from the eve teasers
and the village goons,
to the old days of
luxurious kings and princes.

Life's quest is on....
till the world treated
women as mothers
life's charming
full of beauty and essence;
any change
life loses charm
like the Ganga
perennially lost in the ocean.

Avinash retorts,
out of orbit
you're somewhere,
you're aimless
and you're nowhere!
quest is on....
life's quest,
in the leaves of
the Gita, the Bible and the Quran
and in the temples and shrines
and the quest continues....

* * *

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Puttu Parashuram Kulkarni/ Sport and War

Life is struggling in the frizzy cold,
tearful rivers with flow,
in search of peace
blood dropping from the ice-land hill
five decades ! till thirsty skulls
power to the leader one who stay
in the bore-well
soldier is the ladder-
border is terrible
War is sport- view of a leader
A sport is also a war- a panic's view

Red balls with broken eyes
on the border junction
batman bats for a cup and sip
in "day and night " zip
covered – encroached the heart-
beats every where
bidding the bat in the name-
of refugees
Sunken in the chimney- love and heart
Broken roots are victims of dirt
War is a sport- the leader's view
Even sport is a war- a panic's review

Radiation by the successful
dropping of the bomb
boiled with the poison and
sank in the smoke
shaken bridges for the lengthy route
evaporated softness , of friend and enemies
Chemical liquid content in the milk
for the new generation
line for the tanks-
destroying the flower's root

A war is the sport – proved by the leader
real view- A sport means The War!!!

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S. M. Maheswari/ Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Futile is my search
To quench my thirst for love and peace!
In the wide wild world war-field
Where lust, greed, revenge, pervading anger
Batter and scatter people everywhere!
Groping in the darkness
The battling crowds
Forgetting they're human
Killing one another!
Walls! Invisible walls!
Black and white
Caste and creed
Men and women
Rich and poor
Shattering the Harmony
Have flooded the land with blood and tears!

In the blood-shed red world
Yonder I Find a bright ray of light!
What is it?
A man!
Who is it?
Is he the undaunted man of non-violence?
A man so simple
With a stick in hand
Half-naked
Truth and peace personified
Is he the Mahatma?

How could he become a great soul
I did never try to know why he was called so
Nor did I ever follow his suit!

Mandela!

An unforgettable, admirable figure
With unflinching fighting vigour
Did teach a lesson to the inhuman human power
What lessons to humanity does he preach?
To what conclusions do we reach!

Mother Theresa!

The guiding light of Humanity and Motherhood!
Served Mankind crossing Boundaries
Through kind words she spoke
Healing touch did she make
Soothing effect her sweet smile did evoke
Her empathy and kindness
Won the hearts of people far and wide!
But... What a pity!
I feel neither empathy nor sympathy for Humanity!

Obama!

A black pearl in the White House!
Why was I so elated on his assuming power?
How could I forget the fact
That a tiger is a tiger!
No matter what it's colour and stripe is
The paw may be soft but the claw is't
The Vietnam hamburger they ate
And they write 'Might is Right'
Invisibly on the Gates of Globalization too
But... I wonder how I missed to see it!

Surmounting the corporal boots
Entangled in corporate silent tangle
Lost my identity
Not even noticed

The metamorphosis that took place
 I forgot my roots
 I am in corporate boots

Her name is Lachchi
 (The goddess of Wealth)
 But this penniless Lachchi
 Along with her kids
 Died of a peculiar disease 'Aakali' (hunger)
 Pchch...Thousands of people die
 Of starving bellies everyday
 Unnoticed, unremembered!
 Life is so mechanical!
 I doubt my identity
 Am I human?
 Or a human machine?
 But...under the surface
 Even I agree or disagree
 In the unfathomable depths of my heart
 Beyond the never ending desires
 And everlasting selfish conflicts
 Amidst a confused state
 Of satisfaction and dissatisfaction
 I'm not sure!
 But...in that half-asleep state of mind
 Under the drowsy heavy lids of my eyes
 I see...a vague floating ray of light
 Touching my heart every now and then
 An ideal dream!!
 Oh!! An exquisite dreamy vision!
Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam
 Shall I say...
 An everlasting...never realizing
 ONENESS or ONE FAMILY

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Book Review by Dr. P. K. Panda

Global Village By Biplab Majee
 Published by Mindscape 2008, Price Rs.50.00

Poetry like language inspires itself to transgress boundary and once a poet gets responses from the readers he or she tries to feed on them and write more. This is true of Mr. Biplab Majee who has published "Global Village" as his second venture in the vast panorama of Indian English Poetry. Mindscape, the publishing house which has already made a mark in publishing new yet thought provoking matter for the mind — which can be truly translated as food for mind— has brought it out in an aesthetically sound publication.

Mr. Biplab, as a poet originally started with his mother tongue and published a number of poems in Bengali literary journals. This led to the publication of his **Love Poems & Others** (Translated by Nandita Bhattacharya) in the year 2005. This is probably the background work done by the aware poet of Bengal to finally try his hand at writing in English and attempt to put his maiden venture in the present volume **Global Village** (2008).

Probably the poet in Mr. Biplab Majee is deeply affected by an overwhelming propaganda about the world becoming a global village because of the electronic revolution related to communication system that has connected every individual with others in an unimaginably quick manner possible in the world of magic. He connects dissimilar objects and proceeds with grace to communicate an inner urge that unites souls in a string, as a part of "net" and in the process destroys boundaries:

*There is a close economic relation between
 the sell of Mrs. Rowling's Harry Potter
 and the poverty line of this world (p.29)*

A similar context is created by the poet in the poem Indian:
*A hybrid successor was born
 of a careless
 union of there Aryan & Dravidian*

*And Breaking atom
innumerable men women were born
who are the Indians of today (p.37)*

The poem titled “In which global village do you take me down” the poet makes it more explicit to prove his point:

*In which global village do you take me down
what to do here.*

*The corporate house has purchased
all the fields of Paus month*

If I protest against them

I will be marked as a politician (p. 40)

Perhaps the SEZ is looming large in the poem’s inherent feeling which has forced the poet’s sensibility to deal with this issue which is an impact at globalization and the global villager feels about his or her role during the great transition.

Along with this major theme of the volume in home the poet has intertwined some personal poems, like ‘Grief and ‘Binary system, which reflect the individual caught on a flux of the glory of individual as an individual and individual as an entity in the global village . Thus a poet is reflected on the poems like “The poems of Shakespeare in the postmodern era”, where he speaks of the SMS that has made the world a short space in which you can be in touch with one you wish without much trouble, the volume makes a sensible reading and gives an aesthetic sense to the reader in a refreshing manner. The poet’s use of diction and the terse expressions are good enough to set a mood for the readers. The only change he should make in his endeavour is to sustain a mood through his poems to keep the readers engrossed in the deep rooted feelings he deals in his poems.

The flexi cover of this volume is designed with simplicity, remarkable with an unique innovative typography and not with an abstract graphic, that usually adorns the cover page of poetry volumes, As a whole, the volume is worth reading for it provides food for the mind of poetry lovers and a different design for the minds eye to look at the new global Village as a sight to rejoice.

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Book Review by Amitava Chakrabarty

Weeping Womb by P. L. Sreedharan Parokode

ISBN978-81-313-0670-3

Published by- A.P.H. Publishing Corporation. Price-Rs 495/-

P.L.Sreedharan Paokode is one of the gleaming voices of Indian English Poetry from Kerala. His upbringing in the agrarian ambience owing to his roots at far-flung interiors of the Malappuram district of Kerala, brings out poems which are reflections of the sufferings of the common man,- *The Aam Admi*. Nudged by all pervading decadence of the present world, his verse has poignantly divulged his inner pain, inflicted by the banality of the modern way of living. Without taking recluse into the world of imageries his book-*The Weeping Womb*- excavates the blighted cultural void of the middleclass selfish way of life.

The poem *Cultural poverty* aptly reveals this:

*“Breast less shawls/ bury babies alive/ in the waste baskets and/
drainages*

The modern living has left the utopian mothers smeared with lipstick, ensues an aura of pseudo youthfulness, which their child refuses to accept:

*Mummy/ seemed young/ in lipstick/ thanks beautician/ you/ look
not/ so/ beautiful.— (youthfulness)*

The poem *Model Couple at the restaurant* is another glaring example of the perpetual discord in this turbulence of modernism, it’s ‘give and take’...

“I’ll pay for snacks/ and you to do the other day... ”

Sreedharan’s style is lucid but his poems engage the mind. It is free from the riddles of complex imageries and a tad away from the discipline of prosody, which some may point finger at. They can hardly be scanned into some metric form as the verse runs like some truncated prose without alluding assertions. On the contrary, they are direct from an aggrieved poet, tormented by the ways of modern consumerist society. The satires are direct

and addressed for specific causes.

The poem "Future Advertisement" is a glaring example, in which suitable alliance is solicited for a bride where the only criterion of the groom is to have "own drinking water facility". The poet poignantly indicates at the scarcity of drinking water at different parts of the country, including the metros.

From female feticide to murders due to dowry, from gender injustice to dishonesty in ones profession, the decadence is all pervading and the metastases is fast and unbridled, fanned by an ever-increasing market. One thing is missing is a page for 'contents' making it difficult to find a particular poem at ease.

Sreedharan has claimed this book to be containing "Poetry of time and reality". Once you finish reading it, you can feel that the poet couldn't be truer.

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